

Fire & Rescue Service 2023–25

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service

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Changes to this round of inspection

We last inspected Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service in May 2021. And in December 2021, 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 Lincolnshire 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 Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service has performed in 11 areas. We have made the following graded judgments:

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

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

HMI summary

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

I am relatively pleased with the performance of Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service in keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks, but it needs to improve in some areas to provide a consistently good service. For example, the service could improve its IT systems to allow a more efficient and consistent way of working. It could also improve its ability to make sure all staff understand and demonstrate its values.

We were pleased to see that the service has made progress since our 2021 inspection. For example, it has improved how it engages with the local community to build up a comprehensive profile of risk in the service area.

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

- The service is good at responding to fires and other emergencies. It has developed a response strategy that is based on assessment of risk to the community. I am pleased to highlight two areas of [promising practice](#) relating to its co-responding work as well as the innovative way it uses its 'assured level of risk' model. But it still needs to improve its protection work.
- The service has improved how it uses fire and rescue service resources to manage risk. I am pleased to see it has effectively monitored, reviewed and evaluated the benefits and outcomes of its collaborative activities.
- Although some progress is noted, I am disappointed the service still hasn't done enough to improve its equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). It still needs to improve how it works with its staff and provides feedback in relation to EDI issues. It also needs to improve understanding and use of [equality impact assessments](#) and how it implements a programme of positive action to support staff recruitment and progression.

Overall, the service has improved since our last inspection, but there is still more to do. We recognise the service is currently going through significant changes, which are affecting some areas of work. We will keep in close contact with the service to monitor the effect of these changes. We will also revisit the service to review its improvement plans.



Roy Wilsher

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Service in numbers



Profile

	Lincolnshire	England
Area Square miles	2,292	50,370
Population (thousands) 30 June 2021	768	56,536
Population density Thousands per square mile	0.3	1.1



Cost

Funding Year ending 31 March 2022		£2.5bn
Expenditure per population Year ending 31 March 2022	£37.30	£41.88

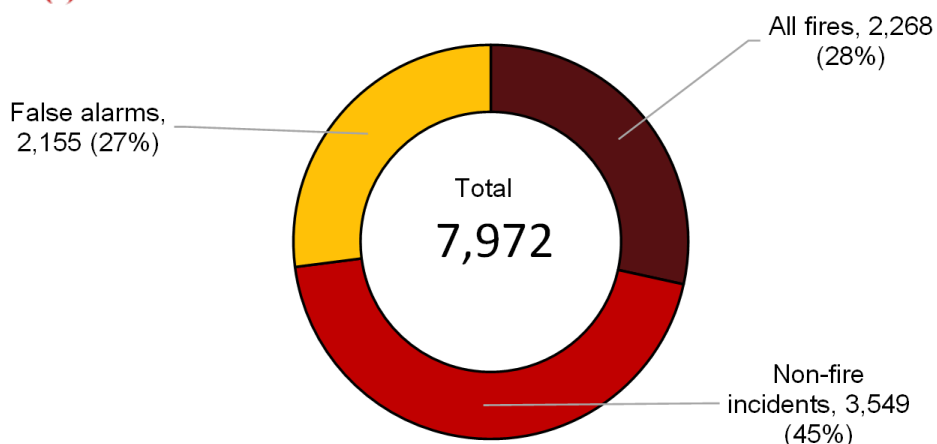


Response

Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 30 September 2022	10.4	11.0
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2022	9.1	7.7
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2022	14.0	2.0
Availability of wholetime pumps Year ending 31 March 2022	100.0%	
Availability of on-call pumps Year ending 31 March 2022	81.0%	



Incidents attended in the year to 30 September 2022



Workforce

	Lincolnshire	England
Five-year change in total workforce 2017 to 2022	0.6%	0.2%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2022	0.81	0.62
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2022	30.6%	65.2%

Percentage of firefighters, workforce and population who are female as at 31 March 2022



Percentage of firefighters, workforce and population who are from ethnic minority backgrounds as at 31 March 2022



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

Adequate

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate 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.

Area for improvement

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

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

Main findings

The service is effective at identifying risk in the community

The service has assessed a suitable range of risks and threats using a thorough community risk management planning process. In its assessment of risk, it uses information it has collected from a broad range of internal and external sources and datasets. This includes local authority, health and social care, climate and weather and historical incident data.

When appropriate, the service has consulted and held constructive dialogue with its communities and other relevant parties to understand risk and explain how it intends to mitigate it. For example, it has spoken with Age UK, the Lincolnshire County Council well-being service and Trading Standards.

The service has an effective community risk management plan

The service refers to its community risk management plan as its [integrated risk management plan \(IRMP\)](#).

Once it has assessed risks, the service records its findings in an easily understood IRMP. 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, the service plans to:

- reduce fires and their consequences;
- reduce road traffic collisions and their consequences;
- improve health and well-being;
- protect the community and environment from the impact of major emergencies;
- manage its resources effectively;
- manage its people effectively; and
- govern the business effectively.

The service also provides context, evidence and background analysis of risk, which informs the IRMP. This is detailed in its community risk profile – [Understanding risk in Lincolnshire 2020–2024](#).

The existing IRMP is near the end of its term, and the service is developing its next plan, which will start in 2024.

The service gathers, maintains and shares a range of risk information, but improvements could be made

The service collects and updates the information it has about the highest-risk people, places and threats it has identified. But some of the site-specific risk information we reviewed lacked detail, such as operational considerations and building construction. Time frames set by the service for gathering information and making it available to firefighters aren't being met.

We sampled a broad range of the risk information the service collects, including for high-rise residential buildings, hospitals and commercial premises.

Risk information, once processed, is available for the service's prevention and protection staff. This means these teams can identify, reduce and mitigate risk. The service is less efficient at sharing temporary risk information with operational crews because IT systems aren't integrated. Therefore, response teams receive this information through paper-based forms, emails or oral communication.

Where appropriate, the service shares risk information with other organisations, such as neighbouring fire and rescue services, to inform them of risk information for premises close to the service's geographical borders.

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

The service uses the outcomes of operational activity effectively to build an understanding of risk

The service records and communicates operational risk information effectively. It also routinely updates [risk assessments](#) and uses feedback from local and national operational activities to inform its planning assumptions. For example, the operational learning board helps to make information more widely available. It collects learning that results from incidents and shares this with relevant departments so they can put learning into action.

If the protection team is involved at an incident, the team can provide feedback at a response meeting on whether the request for a protection team member was correct. The quality of the initial fire investigation tasks carried out by operational crews is also reviewed by the protection team. This can lead to the identification of a training need.

Preventing fires and other risks

Adequate

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate 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.

Area for improvement

The service should manage the performance of station staff's prevention work in a more consistent manner.

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 increased home fire safety checks but still has work to do

The service's prevention strategy is clearly linked to the risks it has identified in its IRMP. The service set itself an annual target of 10,000 [home fire safety checks](#) for 2022/23 but it didn't meet this target. However, the leadership team feel that the target helped increase service output from 3,312 visits in 2021/22 to 5,207 visits in 2022/23, which is a clear improvement. But as the annual target of 10,000 isn't being met, it isn't clear how the 50,000 higher-risk properties that the service has identified will be visited within 5 years.

The service's teams work well together and with other relevant organisations on prevention, and they share relevant information when needed. The service uses information to adjust its planning assumptions and direct activity between its prevention, protection and response functions. For example, the service:

- has gained access to community groups that have diverse needs, such as through its partnership with Lincolnshire Traveller Initiative;
- has presented fire safety messages in different languages at events; and
- is working to improve how well people from eastern European communities understand fire risk and how to access support and the 999 service.

The targeting of prevention activity is improving

The service uses a risk-based approach to clearly prioritise its prevention activity towards people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. It is currently changing how it targets its activity. Previously, it used data to create a geographical area of heightened risk. The service recognised that this wasn't an efficient approach. It now creates datasets that focus on at-risk households, which better targets resources to risk. This new approach is being introduced across the service so that all operational crews carry out their targeted home fire safety activity this way.

The service uses a broad range of information and data to target its prevention activity at [vulnerable individuals](#) and groups. The range of vulnerabilities is encompassed in the SHERMAN model:

- smoker;
- hoarder;
- elderly;
- reduced mobility;
- mental health;
- alcohol misuse; and
- needs care or support.

It carries out a range of interventions, which it adapts to the level of risk in its communities. Households identified during a visit as higher risk can be offered extra support. Referrals to partner agencies, such as Lincolnshire social services, East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS), Lincolnshire Police and Age UK, are also made where appropriate to further support the household and reduce risk.

Staff have the skills and competence to complete home fire safety checks

Staff told us they have the right skills and confidence to make home fire safety checks. These visits cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put vulnerable people at greater risk from fire and other emergencies. [On-call](#) staff don't routinely take part in prevention work as part of the service strategy. The on-call staff we spoke with said they would like to receive training and be more involved in carrying out prevention work.

Staff are competent in dealing with safeguarding concerns

Staff we interviewed told us about occasions when they had identified [safeguarding](#) problems. They told us that they feel confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly. Staff are trained in dealing with safeguarding issues for both adults and children. They have a safeguarding flowchart to help in their decision-making for safeguarding referrals.

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

The service works with a wide range of other organisations to prevent fires and other emergencies. These include Lincolnshire Police, EMAS, Trading Standards and Tobacco Control.

We found good evidence that the service routinely refers people at greatest risk to organisations that may better meet their needs. These organisations include the Lincolnshire County Council well-being service and Age UK. The service also receives referrals from others, such as the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The service acts appropriately on the referrals it receives. For example, it visits properties and gives people advice in English, Ukrainian and Russian.

The service has arrangements in place to tackle fire-setting behaviour

The service has a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people with different needs who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. This includes the fire intervention scheme. It is also part of an arson task force with Lincolnshire Police.

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

Two members of staff who worked in this area retired recently. One has been replaced and at the time of our inspection, the other vacancy was in the process of being filled. This has affected the work the service is able to carry out. The service was confident that this will improve once both roles are filled.

The service evaluates its prevention work effectively

The service has good evaluation tools to measure the effectiveness of its activity and make sure all sections of its communities can access the prevention services they need. For example, the provider Touchstone calls residents about three months after they receive a home fire safety check. It checks residents' understanding and asks if their behaviours have changed to assess if the visits help reduce risk.

Prevention activities take account of feedback from the public, other organisations and other parts of the service. A prevention manager oversees prevention work. The communications team monitors social media for feedback. The service also seeks feedback from partners about referrals. Community fire safety advocates complete prevention activity evaluation forms.

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

Station-based staff are inconsistent in their understanding of station prevention targets

We found that station-based staff had inconsistent knowledge and understanding of the service's prevention strategy. Staff gave a range of different answers when asked about a station plan or station targets for prevention activity. This is an area for improvement.

Protecting the public through fire regulation

Requires improvement

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at protecting the public through fire regulation.

All fire and rescue services should assess fire risks in certain buildings and, when necessary, require building owners to comply with fire safety legislation. Each service decides how many assessments it does each year. But it must have a locally determined, risk-based inspection programme for enforcing the legislation.

Areas for improvement

The service should assure itself it has a single, robust risk-based inspection programme that prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.

The service should assure itself that its use of enforcement powers prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.

The service should make sure it works with local businesses and large organisations to share information and expectations on compliance with fire safety regulations.

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 linked to its IRMP

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

Staff across the service are involved in this activity, effectively exchanging information as needed. For example, operational crews are trained to hazard-spot, which helps them to identify any fire safety legislation compliance problems in business premises. They then pass on this information to the protection team for further action. The service uses information to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between its protection, prevention and response functions. This means resources are better aligned with risk.

Activity isn't always aligned with the highest risk

The service has a risk-based inspection programme, but it is limited in scope and doesn't identify all the highest-risk premises in the service's area. The service has a second list, called the themed list. This is a list of premises that haven't been inspected yet but are known to the service as a potential risk because of their type of use. For example, we found that out of 293 care homes in Lincolnshire, 103 weren't covered by the risk-based inspection programme. The service has a plan to audit all these premises through campaigns.

Risk-based inspection programme audits we reviewed had been completed in the time frames the service has set itself. The service is making good progress in this programme and was ahead of schedule at the time of our inspection.

Quality assurance of protection work takes place

The service carries out quality assurance of its protection activity. Twice a year, all inspectors who carry out fire risk assessment visits are accompanied by a peer assessor (lead inspector). Once a year, a quality assurance review of audits is completed for all inspectors, and dip sampling records of these audits are kept. Twice a year, watch manager divisional inspectors carry out quality assurance of home fire safety checks made by operational crews.

Audit quality isn't consistent

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

- as part of the service's risk-based inspection programme;
- after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applies;
- after enforcement action had been taken; or
- at high-rise, high-risk buildings.

Not all the audits we reviewed were completed in a consistent, systematic way or in line with the service's policies. We found examples of poor quality when reviewing files, such as:

- a premises being marked as the wrong level of risk – medium instead of high;
- some files that were difficult to find due to the system in place;
- some files that weren't well structured;
- the drop-down lists in the system not working as they should; and
- a follow-up audit being missed, which the service said was due to a new inspector.

The service makes relevant information from its audits available to operational teams and control room operators.

The service's enforcement activity isn't effective

The service often uses its enforcement powers, although many of these enforcements are informal notifications. It hasn't undertaken any prosecutions for at least six years, from 2016/17 to the time of our inspection.

In the year ending 31 March 2022, the service issued 1 alteration notice, 124 informal notifications, 7 enforcement notices and 11 prohibition notices.

Of the 143 enforcement actions taken in the year ending March 2022, there was only 1 satisfactory audit. This indicates that while enforcement action is taken, it isn't effective and audits aren't being completed after enforcement action.

The service is working towards being fully resourced

The service has enough qualified protection staff to meet the requirements of its risk-based inspection programme. The service is currently two members of staff below its full establishment figure and is managing this shortfall while trying to fill the vacancies. Once these vacant posts are filled, the service should be able to provide the range of audit and enforcement activity needed, both now and in the future.

Staff get the right training and work to appropriate accreditation.

The service is adapting to new legislation

Since our last inspection, the [Building Safety Act 2022](#) and the [Fire Safety 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 completed the building risk review work on 19 premises within set time frames. Two of these premises had unsafe cladding and remediation work is in progress.

The Fire Safety 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 that the service had arrangements in place to receive this information.

But provision of training on this new legislation has been inconsistent. Not all staff we spoke with were confident about the effect of the changes.

The service works well with others

The service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety and routinely exchanges risk information with them. Following protection inspections, it has regular discussions and meetings with licensing departments, housing officers and building control.

The service responds well to building consultations and licensing requests

The service responds to building consultations on time. This means it consistently meets its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. The service has a 15-day deadline to deal with building or licensing consultations and is currently meeting its service level agreement 98 percent of the time.

The service should improve its work with businesses to promote fire safety

The service could do more to work with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. It plans to increase this work after the two vacancies in the service are filled.

The service is effective at reducing unwanted fire signals

An effective risk-based approach is in place to manage the number of unwanted fire signals. The service has a call-challenge process in place to limit unnecessary fire engine deployments. It has a clear procedure to deal with repeat calls to the same premises, which includes action that can result in a fire safety audit being carried out.

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

Responding to fires and other emergencies

Good

Lincolnshire 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.

Promising practice

The service has an effective co-responding model

The service's co-responding work is highly successful and has been an important part of the service for many years. Fire service staff have been trained to provide life support until the ambulance service arrives. They are proud to be involved with this work. The public is made safer through the early intervention the co-responders provide.

Recently, funding for this work was at risk, but the service has found new funding. The service runs the co-responding model without making a profit or loss.

The service can adjust resources using its assured level of risk process

The service's 'assured level of risk' process is a dynamic working practice that allows resources to be adjusted based on risk.

If a station area has an increase in incidents or risk, the service can move resources from [on-call](#) stations to help with prevention and protection work. It does this by increasing available working hours and training. This work is monitored and when the service feels the risk has been reduced, it moves this resource to other locations in need.

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 its IRMP

The service's response strategy is linked to the risks it has identified in its IRMP. 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. For example, the service operates a range of duty systems to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of its workforce. The service has a process called 'assured level of risk', which helps it increase on-call activity in certain station areas in response to an increase in risk.

The service consistently meets its response standard

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. But the service has set out its own response standards in its IRMP. The service aims to respond to [dwelling fires](#) within an average of 11 minutes for the first fire engine and other incidents within an average of 15 minutes for the first fire engine.

The service consistently meets its standards. Home Office data shows that in the year ending 31 March 2022, the service's response time to dwelling fires was 9 minutes and 42 seconds. This is in line with the average for predominantly rural services.

Availability is managed well by the service

In the year ending 31 March 2022, [wholetime](#) availability was 100 percent and on-call availability was 81 percent. Overall annual availability was 84.5 percent. This is a good availability rate when considering that the service is mainly on-call.

Staff have a good understanding of how to command incidents safely

The service has trained incident commanders who are assessed regularly and properly. Commanders we spoke with feel confident to respond to a wide range of incidents. This helps the service safely, assertively and effectively manage the whole range of incidents it could face, from small and routine ones to complex multi-agency incidents.

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

Control room staff are involved in training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity

We were pleased to see the service's control room staff integrated into its command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity. We were told about an example of a high-rise exercise the service had organised that involved control room staff throughout. After incidents or exercises, staff complete debrief forms to identify learning. The assurance team reviews this information and decides what action is needed. This may involve procuring equipment, changing procedures, additional training or sharing information across the service. Feedback from control room staff has led to changes being made to [fire control](#)'s evacuation boards. These are used for collating important information that is shared during an evacuation of a premises.

The service's management of risk information is improving

We sampled a range of risk information from the central database and at several fire stations. This included the information in place for firefighters who respond 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. The service aims to have risk information on the system within 30 days of carrying out a visit. This allows ten days for crews to upload paperwork, ten days for quality assurance work and ten days for the information to be placed on the system. The service wants to reduce the total time for this process to 15 days in future. But we found some risk files that were delayed and didn't meet the service's current time frames.

The service makes efforts to record learning from incidents locally and nationally

As part of this inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. These included a high-rise exercise and several operational incidents.

We were pleased to see that the service routinely follows its policies to make sure that staff command incidents in line with operational guidance. It updates internal risk information with the information it receives. And it exchanges this information with appropriate organisations, such as neighbouring fire and rescue services, and other stakeholders, such as Lincolnshire Police, EMAS and the local council.

The service has recognised that individuals often don't complete debrief forms to provide feedback for learning. These are paper forms, and the lack of a digital system hinders the process. When the forms are completed and returned, the service records and shares the learning well.

The service has responded to learning from incidents to improve its service for the public. For example, at a house fire, crews were delayed in taking smoke hoods from the fire engine into the property because they weren't easy to access. This problem was raised via the debrief form. As a result, the service has changed where smoke hoods are stored on fire engines to make sure they can be accessed quickly. This change has been shared with and adopted by all stations.

We were encouraged to see that 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 the monitoring of [national operational learning](#) and [joint organisational learning](#) for updates, which is carried out by the single point of contact for the service.

The service is effective at keeping the public informed

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 sharing information on the internet, social media, local radio broadcasts and warning and informing through the [local resilience forum \(LRF\)](#). The service often sends out joint messages to the public with the police. The joint location for police and fire control helps this process.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents

Good

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

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

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

Main findings

The service is 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. Some of the identified risks are dwelling fires, road traffic collisions, flooding, severe flooding, malicious attacks and water risks.

It is also familiar with the significant risks neighbouring fire and rescue services may face and which it might be asked to respond to in an emergency. Firefighters have access to risk information from neighbouring services. Most neighbouring services share risks within five miles of their service area border. Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service shares risks within ten miles of its borders with other services. This information is available through [mobile data terminals](#) and [Resilience Direct](#), the UK's secure online network for emergency responders.

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

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

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

We found that the service had well-developed policies and procedures in place for safely managing this type of incident. Most staff understand them. The service has an electronic system to record fire survival guidance call information in the control room and display it simultaneously at the bridgehead (the position where firefighters are carrying out firefighting operations) and in command units. This system has been tested and used successfully on exercises.

The service has provided firefighters with practical high-rise training, but a small number of firefighters haven't received this training due to a recording error. The service can't identify who has missed this training.

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

The service is well prepared to work with other fire and rescue services

The service supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents. For example, in responding to floods. It works well with other fire and rescue services and as part of a multi-agency response.

The service uses [national resilience assets](#), such as a high-volume pump. This is used to deliver or remove large volumes of water at an incident. It regularly uses this equipment both inside and outside its service area.

The service is attempting to increase the number of cross-border exercises

The service has a cross-border exercise plan with neighbouring fire and rescue services to help 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. We were encouraged to see the service uses feedback from these exercises to inform risk information and service plans.

Although the exercise plan is in place, the service hasn't carried out as many cross-border exercises as it would like because of the availability of neighbouring services. Senior leaders have discussed this issue at the regional operations co-ordinating committee meeting, and the service has been assured that the number of exercises will increase.

Staff have a good understanding of JESIP

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

The service could give us strong evidence that it consistently follows these principles. Supervisory managers show a good understanding of tactical modes (a way to communicate decisions made by incident commanders) and can explain how JESIP are applied. Senior officers also show a good understanding of the principles and have confidence in working with other agencies in an emergency. We spoke with another emergency service in Lincolnshire, which told us that the fire and rescue service always acts professionally and is effective at operational incidents.

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 was identifying any problems it had with applying JESIP. It takes appropriate, prompt action with other emergency services to rectify any issues identified during multi-agency debriefs following an incident or exercise.

The service is an integral part of the Lincolnshire LRF

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with partners, including [Category 1 responders](#), Lincolnshire Police, EMAS and local authorities, that make up the Lincolnshire LRF. These arrangements include multi-agency exercises to make sure they are prepared for major incidents.

The service is a valued partner of the LRF and contributes to the tactical and strategic co-ordinating groups. The chief fire officer is the chair of the LRF, and other members of the service also chair several subgroups within the LRF. 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. This has included a flooding exercise that required the strategic co-ordinating group to be active for seven days, with officers attending on a rota basis. Other events have included multi-agency gold incident command courses and training with the Royal Air Force.

The service shares and contributes to national learning

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

The service receives information from and contributes to both national operational learning and joint organisational learning. It passes identified learning to its operational learning board to act on. This may involve changes being made to training, procedures or guidance.

Making best use of resources

Adequate

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate 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 2023/24 is £23.6m. This is an 8.75 percent increase from the previous financial year.

Area for improvement

The service needs to show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention, protection and response activities. This should reflect, and be consistent with, the risks and priorities set out in its integrated risk management plan.

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 needs to show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention, protection and response activities

The service uses its resources well to manage risk, but there remain weaknesses that need addressing. The allocation of resources for prevention, protection and response isn't clearly linked to the service's plans. For example, the service has identified that it needs to carry out 50,000 home fire safety checks at higher-risk properties over a 5-year period. But it isn't clear how the service will resource this activity. And resources within protection aren't clearly aligned with the service's highest-risk premises. The service's risk-based inspection programme doesn't include all its highest-risk premises. Some of these premises are included on a themed list and haven't been inspected yet.

The service has already made some changes after evaluating 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. This evaluation work has informed the service to better understand its needs. As a result, the service has made duty system changes at certain locations, such as the planned change at Sleaford fire station, which it expects will improve productivity and efficiency. It has also identified where specialist rescue units and equipment need to be located and the skills required to meet current and emerging risks. This has resulted in the increase of technical rescue assets at risk-based locations.

The service is currently undergoing a large resourcing project as part of developing its IRMP. The aim of this project is to consider how and why the service resources certain areas of work. We look forward to seeing the outcomes of this project.

The service builds its financial plans on sound scenarios. These plans help make sure the service is sustainable and are underpinned by financial controls that reduce the risk of misusing public money. Financial performance indicators support these plans, which are monitored throughout the year by Lincolnshire County Council's corporate leadership team.

The service is working on improving productivity and implementing new ways of working

Since the last inspection, the service has been ambitious with some productivity targets, such as the increased target for home fire safety checks for operational staff and the prevention team. This has led to a marked improvement in output within this area.

But the service recognises the inconsistency of how performance is managed at a more local level, which is clearly affecting staff productivity.

Plans are in place to improve this with change programmes such as the ongoing resourcing project. It is too early to see the effects of these changes, but we look forward to reviewing the outcomes of this work.

The service has completed a detailed study of activity on fire stations, which has given the service a basis for discussions with staff about workloads and productivity. The service intends to develop this further by getting feedback from staff.

The service's IT provisions currently don't support an efficient way of working and are preventing it from increasing productivity. The service is aware of this and is making improvements to IT, which include upgrading infrastructure in conjunction with the county council's priorities. This is expected to take some time.

The service collaborates well with others

We were pleased to see that the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate. It routinely considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. It has a range of collaborative arrangements, which include:

- a joint control room and headquarters with Lincolnshire Police;
- joint fire and ambulance stations shared with EMAS;
- co-responding from 25 locations in partnership with EMAS and [LIVES \(Lincolnshire Integrated Voluntary Emergency Service\)](#) in response to cardiac and respiratory arrest and similar life-threatening emergencies; and
- a purpose-built 'blue light' campus, shared with Lincolnshire Police and EMAS, which has reduced operating costs for all three organisations.

Collaborative work is aligned with the priorities in the service's IRMP. For example, the service has a member of staff in the road safety partnership who carries out work to meet joint road safety objectives across Lincolnshire.

The service comprehensively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations. Records of this work are kept. It asks for feedback from the organisations it works with to make sure they also see the benefits of any given collaboration. For example, after a review of its co-responding work with EMAS and LIVES, the service identified a more efficient way of working that better matched EMAS's risk areas. The service has also identified a more sustainable funding source from the integrated care board. This was an area for improvement in our previous report that has now been discharged.

Continuity arrangements are in place and tested regularly

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

The service has appropriate business continuity plans in case industrial action takes place. It has made sure and can show that it has enough resources available for future periods of industrial action. Arrangements include access to a pool of recently retired staff if extra resources are needed. Training is in place for these staff. The plans have been tested and are reviewed afterwards.

The service has also carried out a national power outage exercise with fire control. The results assured the service that staff are well trained and plans are suitable.

The service has worked with Lincolnshire County Council to improve its financial management

The service is part of Lincolnshire County Council, which provides support and training for staff responsible for managing budgets.

There are regular joint reviews with Lincolnshire County Council to consider all the service's expenditure, including its non-pay costs. This scrutiny makes sure the service gets value for money.

Actual revenue expenditure compared with forecast revenue expenditure is reviewed monthly. A project board monitors how projects are progressing and the service's capital expenditure. An end-of-project evaluation is now also carried out.

The service is taking steps to make sure it achieves efficiency gains through sound financial management and best working practices. It is doing this in important areas such as procurement. The service uses national procurement frameworks to get the best possible purchasing power. Purchases through procurement frameworks include mobile data terminals, leased cars, emergency vehicles, uniforms and personal protective equipment. An innovation and evaluation group reviews equipment purchased.

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

Adequate

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at making the service affordable now and in the future.

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

Area for improvement

The service needs to assure itself that it is making the most of opportunities to improve workforce productivity and develop future capacity through the use of innovation, including technology.

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 an understanding of future financial challenges

The service understands its future financial challenges. Lincolnshire County Council has supported the service with increased funding to mitigate its main financial risks. For example, the 2023/24 revenue budget includes extra funding to cover price and pay inflation pressures, including the firefighter pay award agreed for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

The underpinning assumptions are robust, realistic and prudent. They take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions.

The service is contributing towards Lincolnshire County Council's objective of making a 1 percent efficiency saving across its revenue budget between 2023/24 and 2025/26. Following the purchase of the Waddington training centre, the service estimates it has reduced its lease costs by £70,000.

The service is also planning for the end of the East Coast and Hertfordshire Control Consortium in 2025. It anticipates that alternative arrangements will be able to provide the same level of resilience at a reduced cost.

The service is planning to review potential savings options and to carry out an impact assessment. This will support future scenario planning work with Lincolnshire County Council.

There are clear arrangements for accessing reserves

Reserves are held by Lincolnshire County Council. There is a robust process with proper scrutiny for the service to access reserves if they are needed.

The service has improved the link between its fleet strategy and its IRMP

The service's fleet strategy has clear links to its IRMP. The fleet strategy outlines how the service intends to make sure vehicles are procured, renewed and replaced to meet current and future operational needs as well as user requirements and the needs of its communities. It also outlines how the service intends to make sure that its capability and effectiveness are aligned with the service's risk reduction activities, which are encompassed in its IRMP. This was an area for improvement in our previous report that has now been discharged.

The service's capital programme is planned until 2025 and includes a budget for investing in and replacing some of its existing vehicles.

The service reviews this strategy so that it can assess the effect any change in fleet provision or future innovation may have on risk.

The service's estates strategy is included in Lincolnshire County Council's corporate property strategy. A new fire and rescue service estates strategy was being drafted at the time of our inspection.

The service needs to improve its technology to support change and improve efficiency

The service has recognised that its IT systems don't support efficient working. Many members of staff, at all levels of the service, described them as "clunky".

This affects most areas of work and means the service can't achieve as much as it would like. Many areas are still on paper-based systems, which makes simple tasks, such as sharing information between departments, more difficult.

Work has started to improve this. Microsoft 365 was recently introduced successfully. The service and its staff are now in the early stages of improving their knowledge and understanding of what this IT platform can do.

As part of the service's resourcing project, it is considering the people, skills and amount and type of equipment it needs to bring about sustainable future change. This work is taking place alongside the development of its next IRMP.

Income generation isn't a priority for the service

The service stopped operating an external trading arm several years ago. It gains cost recovery in some areas, such as the training school and some of the collaborative work that takes place.

Other services, both nationally and internationally, pay to use the service's training centre for their own training. There are ongoing discussions with external bodies to use the site further.

Promoting the right values and culture

Requires improvement

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement 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.

Areas for improvement

The service should make sure all staff understand and demonstrate its values.

The service should assure itself that senior managers are visible and demonstrate service values through their behaviours.

The service should make sure well-being provision is accessible to all staff.

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 well-defined values, but work needs to be done to make sure all staff demonstrate them

The service has well-defined values under a model called [THRIVE](#) (based on the service's key behaviours of trust, help, respect, include, value and empower), which staff understand. Of those who responded to our staff survey, 96 percent (176 out of 183) stated that they are aware of the service's values.

The culture of the organisation doesn't always align with its values. Some behaviours we saw or were told about don't meet the standards expected, and there isn't a strong

culture of challenge. For example, during our inspection, we witnessed inappropriate language, and we were made aware of misogynistic comments being made about other members of staff. The service is aware of this and has assured us that it is taking appropriate action. The service should make sure all staff understand and demonstrate the service's values. This was an area for improvement from our previous inspection and will remain in place.

The service has implemented the [Core Code of Ethics](#) and staff understand it. This runs alongside the service's THRIVE values model.

We found some staff who felt that senior leaders don't always demonstrate service values or act as good role models. The senior leadership team was described as "still a bit of a boys' club". Some staff felt that communication and visibility of senior leaders are poor. We also heard that some staff have no confidence in challenging poor behaviour as they feel it would harm their promotion prospects.

The service provides good well-being support services for staff but needs to improve accessibility and understanding

The service has some well-being provisions in place to support the mental and physical health of staff. This includes a peer-to-peer support network and access to mental health support through Lincolnshire County Council, which also offers counselling. But we spoke with several staff members who don't feel the services on offer are accessible, and some had sought support outside the service.

The service did have a well-established mental health support process in place, which it had to change at short notice. The replacement process offers the same or improved support products, but the service recognises that it is taking time for staff to understand and have confidence in accessing it.

There are good provisions in place to promote staff well-being. These include a weekly bulletin from the service and posters displayed at service premises. Of those who responded to our staff survey, 24 percent (44 out of 183) told us they discuss their personal well-being and/or work-related stress with their manager weekly, 32 percent (59 out of 183) discuss it monthly, 17 percent (31 out of 183) quarterly, 11 percent (21 out of 183) annually and 15 percent (28 out of 183) never. Most staff reported that they understand the well-being support processes available.

During our inspection, we heard many accounts of how the service's change programmes are negatively affecting staff members' mental health. We were told this has been made worse by the poor communication of these changes by senior leaders.

The service should make sure that well-being provision is accessible to all staff.

The service has a good 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, and the service promotes them effectively to all staff. Oversight is provided by the service's management board and the bi-monthly health and safety committee meetings, which report on trends and statistics, such as vehicle accidents and [near misses](#). Of those who responded to our staff survey, 97 percent (177 out of 183) stated that they understand the policies and procedures in place to make sure they can work safely. Both staff and representative bodies have confidence in the health and safety approach the service takes.

The service monitors staff who have secondary employment or dual contracts to make sure they comply with the secondary employment policy and don't work excessive hours. The service's workforce planning manager makes sure the service is legally compliant. But monitoring of staff hours relies on some local management by line managers, and when visiting stations, we found varied levels of understanding of the policy.

Absence management processes are clear

We found that there were 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. Staff members told us that their absences were managed professionally and sensitively. These staff had regular contact with the service while they were absent. When they returned to work, they were informed of the support available to them and about any triggers that may affect them in the future.

Getting the right people with the right skills

Good

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

Fire and rescue services should have a workforce plan in place that is linked to their [community risk management plans](#). It should set out their current and future skills requirements and address capability gaps. This should be supplemented by a culture of continuous improvement, including appropriate learning and development throughout the service.

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

Main findings

The service has improved its workforce planning

The service has good workforce planning in place for its operational response. This makes sure that skills and capabilities align with what it needs to effectively carry out the response element of its IRMP. For example, the workforce planning strategic group and the internal resourcing board make sure that recruitment and promotion are effective and meet the needs of the service. The service told us that it is moving to an annual promotion process where roles are filled in a logical sequence. Eligibility for promotion is assessed once a year and remains valid for 12 months.

Workforce and succession planning is subject to scrutiny in the form of regular meetings to discuss requirements. This is done through the workforce planning strategic group.

The service has struggled to fill or maintain a full complement of protection staff and hasn't successfully planned for succession in this area.

Workforce skills and capabilities are managed well

Most staff told us that they could access the training they need to be effective in their role. This wasn't just focused on operational skills. The service's training plans make sure they can maintain competence and capability effectively. For example, staff told us that they have an annual training planner on PDRPro – a system that provides access to all training content, assessments, sign-off and records of progress.

The service uses PDRPro to monitor staff competence. Managers have access so that they can see staff progress at any time. The service regularly updates its understanding of staff skills and risk-critical safety capabilities through fire control, which runs a report each day for the five core operational skills. If any operational staff aren't up to date on these skills, they are made unavailable immediately. This approach means the service can identify gaps in workforce capabilities.

The service has a good learning and improvement culture

The service promotes a culture of continuous improvements throughout the organisation, and it encourages staff to learn and develop. For example, the service provides a wide range of e-learning modules, including management training. It is also currently piloting the [National Fire Chiefs Council's \(NFCC\)](#) supervisory manager development programme.

We were pleased to see that the service has a range of training resources in place. These include multi-agency gold incident command courses for group manager and above, national inter-agency liaison officer training for fire control station and [watch](#) managers and protection training for operational watch and crew managers.

Most staff told us they can access a range of learning and development resources. They can follow the annual training planner and keep track of progress on PDRPro. This allows them to do their jobs effectively.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity

Requires improvement

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement 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.

Cause of concern

Since our last inspection, the service has made enough improvement to address two of our previous recommendations. But it still needs to improve equality, diversity and inclusion. The following recommendations remain in place.

Recommendations

Within 28 days, the service should resubmit an action plan that details how it intends to:

- improve how it works with its staff and provides feedback in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion issues;
- improve the understanding and use of [equality impact assessments](#) in all aspects of its work and consider if its policies and procedures are inclusive and support those with [protected characteristics](#); and
- make sure that there is a programme of positive action to support its recruitment.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure all locations have appropriate facilities for all staff.

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

Main findings

The service should do more to seek and act on staff feedback

Staff have limited confidence in the service's feedback processes and don't think they are effective.

Although the service has some means of gathering staff feedback, they aren't consistent or wide ranging. For example, the service told us it has an 'ask SLT' (senior leadership team) mailbox, which allows staff to ask service leaders questions. Service leaders carry out station visits and 'ride-along days' when they spend the day at an operational station. But most staff we spoke with feel that this isn't happening regularly enough or producing the results the service expects.

Representative bodies reported that they have meaningful and regular communication with the service.

Staff don't have confidence in the service's approach to dealing with bullying, harassment and discrimination

The service should improve staff understanding of bullying, [harassment](#) and discrimination, including their duty to eliminate them. In our staff survey, 17 percent (32 out of 183) told us that they have been subject to bullying or harassment and 19 percent (35 out of 183) to discrimination over the past 12 months.

Although the service has clear policies and procedures in place, staff have limited confidence in how effectively it can deal with cases of bullying, harassment and discrimination, as well as grievances and discipline. Some staff don't have confidence in the processes due to a perceived lack of confidentiality and a fear that raising issues may negatively affect their career progression chances. Some staff felt that raising grievances would make things worse.

The service is having limited success in addressing disproportionality in recruitment and retention

There is an open, fair and honest recruitment process for staff or those wishing to work for the fire and rescue service. The service has an effective system to understand and remove the risk of disproportionality in recruitment processes. For example, in the past 18 months, there has been a significant change to how the service recruits. It now carries out positive action days with the aim of recruiting from underrepresented groups. The service has provided education to staff to inform them of the difference between positive action and positive discrimination. It is using analytics to understand who is attending its 'have a go days' and at what point people are dropping out of its recruitment processes. This helps to show what needs to be changed to help people develop the right skills to complete the selection and recruitment process.

The service needs to do more to increase staff diversity. There has been no progress in improving ethnic and gender diversity. In the year ending 31 March 2022 no new joiners self-declared as being from an ethnic minority background. The proportion of firefighters who are from an ethnic minority background has decreased from 4.3 percent (27 people) in 2020/21 to 3.1 percent (19 people) in 2021/22. The proportion of female firefighters has decreased from 8.6 percent (55 people) to 8 percent (50 people) over the same period.

In the year ending March 2022, 3.1 percent of the workforce was from an ethnic minority background compared with 10.3 percent of the local population and 8 percent throughout all fire and rescue services. Out of the whole workforce, 13.7 percent were women compared with an average of 18.6 percent throughout all fire and rescue services. Most women work in support staff roles.

The service still needs to improve its implementation of EDI

The service has improved its approach to EDI. But more still needs to be done to remove our cause of concern from the last inspection.

It has introduced a new face-to-face training programme that has received mostly positive feedback. But during our inspection, some staff shared negative comments regarding the training and stated that it is operationally focused and makes no mention of misogyny in the workplace.

The service has an EDI steering group. This group supports the service in its decision-making and provides feedback and input into discussion points. All senior leaders we spoke with stated that they support this process and feel the service is now better focused on making sustainable improvements to EDI.

All staff we interviewed had an awareness of EDI. Most felt that there has been a noticeable increase in EDI discussions, products and training. But some felt that these aren't genuine and that they lack depth. There is still some reluctance to challenge senior leaders on EDI issues as some staff fear it may harm their career progression chances.

The service has staff networks, which give staff a sense of belonging and underrepresented groups a chance to be heard and make changes. But some staff networks have struggled to maintain membership or make progress. To support this, some staff use Lincolnshire County Council staff networks. The service has stated that it wants fire and rescue service staff networks to be the priority as this is where issues specific to fire would be best placed. The service should keep working on supporting fire service staff networks and consider what, if any, barriers are limiting their uptake.

The service should improve how it works with its staff and provide feedback in relation to EDI issues. This is a recommendation from the cause of concern in our last inspection and will remain in place.

The service takes some positive action for recruitment. But positive action for progression is limited or non-existent. The service should focus on improving this, which will support its attempts to further diversify leadership at all levels. This is a recommendation from the cause of concern in our last inspection and will remain in place.

Although the service has a policy and processes in place to assess equality impact, it is yet to implement these across the service. As a result, any policies and decisions are made without an [equality impact assessment](#) being carried out. The service should increase knowledge and understanding of the equality impact assessment process and make sure enough supervision is in place so that the policy is adhered to consistently. This is a recommendation from the cause of concern from our last inspection and will remain in place.

Feedback from staff highlighted that some facilities aren't appropriate for female staff. This was acknowledged by several senior leaders we spoke with, who agreed that the standard of facilities at some locations isn't what it should be. This is an area for improvement.

Managing performance and developing leaders

Requires improvement

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement 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.

Areas for improvement

The service should improve all staff understanding and application of the performance development review process and ensure they are completed for all staff.

The service should assure itself it has an effective mechanism in place for succession planning including senior leadership roles.

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

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

Main findings

The service should make sure it is managing individual performance of all staff

The service has a performance management system in place. In the year ending 31 March 2022, the performance development review completion rates for staff groups were:

- 96 percent for on-call staff;
- 62 percent for wholetime staff;
- 50 percent for support staff; and
- 39 percent for fire control staff.

The service should increase performance development review completion rates so that it can effectively develop and assess the individual performance of all staff.

Of those who responded to our staff survey, 85 percent (156 out of 183) reported that they had a performance development review with their manager in the past 12 months. And 68 of staff said that they find them useful. Staff members who complete development reviews have individual goals and objectives and regular performance assessments. But the service should improve all-staff understanding and application of the performance development review process. It should also make sure reviews are completed for all staff. This was an area for improvement from our last inspection and will remain in place.

The service should do more to ensure fairness in promotion and progression processes

The service needs to do more to make sure staff feel its promotion and progression processes are fair. Of those who responded to our staff survey, 52 percent (96 out of 183) didn't feel that the promotion process was fair. We heard many accounts of this when speaking with staff. There were also several staff members who didn't have confidence in the process because they felt changes were made with little or no communication from one promotion process to the next.

The service told us that it now follows the NFCC's framework and that processes have improved over the past two years. It has produced guidance notes to support the promotion process and make sure it is open and fair.

The service has made some improvements. But it still doesn't have strong succession-planning processes to effectively manage the career pathways of its staff, including roles needing specialist skills. This was an area for improvement from our last inspection and will remain in place.

The service uses temporary promotions appropriately to fill short-term resourcing gaps.

The service should improve its plans to further diversify leadership in the future

The service needs to do more to encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds into middle and senior-level positions. When the service advertises externally, it doesn't make enough use of diversity networks to promote posts. We were told that the service doesn't advertise vacancies through the [Asian Fire Service Association](#) and has only posted a vacancy with [Women in the Fire Service UK](#) once, which was for a group manager role. This means it isn't making the most of opportunities to make its workforce more representative.

The service has recently hired a new member to the senior leadership team that has increased its diversity. But more could be done to attract external talent and to develop the diverse talent that is currently within the service.

The service should improve plans to develop leadership and high-potential staff at all levels

The service needs to improve the way it actively manages the career pathways of staff, including those with specialist skills and those with potential for leadership roles.

It has some schemes in place to develop leaders and high-potential staff. We were told about the service's talent management programme and the pilot of the NFCC's supervisory leadership programme, but this was still in its early stages. The service also told us that it has provided support for some group managers to complete the Warwick Business School and NFCC's executive leadership programme.

The service should consider putting in place more formal arrangements to identify and support members of staff to become senior leaders. This was an area for improvement from our last inspection and will remain in place.

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