

## **SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY**

Meeting	<b>FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</b>
Meeting Date	<b>21 FEBRUARY 2022</b>
Report of	<b>CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>
Report Sponsor(s)	<b>DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER / DIRECTOR OF SERVICE DELIVERY</b>
Subject	<b>STATE OF FIRE AND RESCUE REPORT 2021</b>

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Following the publication of State of Fire and Rescue 2021 by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Sir Thomas Winsor, this report provides an overview of the annual, national report.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are recommended to:-

- a) Note the contents of the report and provide further scrutiny and support to enable continual service improvement.

---

### **CONTENTS**

Main Report  
Appendix A – Tranche 1 key findings

## **BACKGROUND**

1. The HMICFRS released the State of Fire and Rescue report on Wednesday 15 December 2021. The author, Sir Thomas Windsor for HMICFRS, provides a summary of the inspection findings for 13 Fire and Rescue Services in England that were inspected during 2021.
2. The report is divided into 3 parts. Part 1 is Sir Thomas Windsor's assessment of the state of fire and rescue services in England. Part 2 provides an overview of the findings from the inspection activity completed during 2021. Part 3 sets out the full list of HMICFRS fire and rescue publications in the period covered by the report.
3. Sir Thomas acknowledges that suspending HMICFRS inspections due to COVID-19, has affected their work and limits what he can say in the assessment.

## **REPORT OVERVIEW**

4. Following the publication of State of Fire and Rescue 2021 by HMICFRS, Sir Thomas Windsor, this report provides an overview of the annual, national report.

## **STATE OF FIRE AND RESCUE REPORT OVERVIEW**

### **National Recommendations**

5. Four of the national recommendations still have not been implemented. These relate to reducing variation in standards, determining the role of services and firefighters, reviewing the machinery determining terms and conditions, and providing operational independence for Chief Fire Officers. Therefore, as with the last report, no new recommendations have been set this year. Sir Thomas states that the sector must continue to act on the recommendations already made, and at a more urgent pace.
6. In October 2021, Sir Thomas wrote to the Home Office, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), the Local Government Association and National Employers, requesting an update on the progress of implementing the previous recommendations. He has received comprehensive responses from each named body and acknowledges the progress made in each area.

### **National Reform**

7. In March 2021, the Home Secretary announced her plans to further reform fire and rescue. HMICFRS welcomes these plans and hopes to see the subsequent Home Office White Paper published soon.
8. Sir Thomas details the case for reform and describes the influence within the sector that can be contrary to services' values and behaviours, and to the public interest. This is covered in pages 21 and 22 of the State of Fire and Rescue report.
9. Sir Thomas also states the outdated and ineffective structures for negotiating pay, terms and conditions are where reform is most needed. He urges policy-makers, legislators, employers and the wider fire sector to take steps to consider what useful improvement could be made to current terms and conditions and pay negotiation machinery.

## **2021 Inspections**

10. HMICFRS have made changes to the methodology for the second round of inspections on the basis of feedback from services. These changes included:
- a greater focus on diversity, and in particular race and how services are trying to overcome inequalities;
  - considering the productivity of services;
  - assessing how services are identifying and planning against known risks to their communities; and
  - more case file reviews, particularly in relation to protection and the role carried out by services in fire safety regulations

### **Services need to do more on prevention**

11. Although HMICFRS are encouraged by progress in risk planning and protection, the reports also states that service leaders should keep a focus on protection and develop, train and accredit their staff to maintain this progress.

### **Inconsistent funding and governance arrangements persist**

12. Sir Thomas expresses concerns over financial uncertainty and inconsistency in funding arrangements for services. Some public sector organisations were reluctant to consider working with fire services due to their future financial uncertainty.
13. Whilst many services do not struggle financially, some services rely too much on their financial reserves.

### **Some services don't allocate resources appropriately**

14. During the first round of inspections, HMICFRS established that some services were spending too much on their response functions and not enough on prevention and protection. Although, some progress was evident, fewer than half the services inspected in 2021 were able to demonstrate that they were allocating resources appropriately across response, prevention and protection functions. Many services had problems with capacity, in particular with prevention, protection and control functions. HMICFRS identified a range of problems, such as an over-reliance on overtime and a lack of qualified staff in certain areas.

### **Many services rely on dual contracts and overtime**

15. HMICFRS identified that most services have a shortage of crews available at on-call stations. There needs to be a continued, concerted effort by services and policy-makers to create and maintain the conditions necessary to attract and retain enough firefighters to crew engines when they are needed. This includes providing greater flexibility in working arrangements and establishing other financial incentives.

### **Good intentions to promote equality, diversity and inclusion aren't always successful**

16. During the 2021 inspections, HMICFRS found a lack of training on equality, diversity and inclusion, including among managers, and a poor understanding by staff. They continued to find evidence that fire and rescue service staff with protected characteristics, including women, aren't always given opportunities to be heard, and

still find that the number of women working in the sector is very low. Diversity and race equality in the fire sector continues to be woeful.

17. Services must make sure that current staff are aware of the value of having an inclusive workforce and the benefits it can bring for the service and the community it serves.

### **HMICFRS Round 2, Tranche 1 Inspection Overview**

18. As part of the inspection programme, HMICFRS assess and make graded judgements on three principal areas, known as 'pillars'. Each Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) is assessed on:

- its effectiveness;
- its efficiency; and
- how well it looks after its people.

### **Summary of Round 2, Tranche 1 Grades**

Service	Effectiveness	Efficiency	People	Cause of Concern
Avon	RI	RI	RI	
Bedfordshire	G	RI	G	X
Buckinghamshire	RI	RI	RI	X
Cambridgeshire	G	G	G	
Cheshire	G	G	G	
Cornwall	RI	RI	RI	X
Greater Manchester	RI	RI	G	X
Hereford & Worcester	RI	RI	RI	X
Lincolnshire	RI	RI	RI	X
Merseyside	G	O	G	
Northumberland	RI	RI	RI	X
Surrey	RI	RI	RI	
Warwickshire	RI	RI	RI	X

#### **Key**

O – Outstanding

G – Good

RI – Requires Improvement

19. A total of 11 Causes of Concern were issued during Round 2, Tranche 1 inspections.

### **EFFECTIVENESS**

- How well does the FRS understand the risk of fire and other emergencies?
- How effective is the FRS at preventing fire and other risks?
- How effective is the FRS at protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety?
- How effective is the FRS at responding to fires and other emergencies?
- How well prepared is the FRS to respond to major and multi-agency incidents?

### **Most services are prioritising protection work**

20. In the first round of inspections, which HMICFRS carried out between June 2018 and August 2019, they expressed concerns about the extent to which services were adequately prioritising protection work. There had been an observable underinvestment over a prolonged period, as well as a reduction in the number of specialist staff and fire safety audits.
21. Although fewer than a third of services have been inspected during 2021, the improvements seen so far indicate that the sector has responded positively to these concerns.
22. Most services have increased their number of fire safety inspectors; as a result, they have more capacity to carry out fire safety audits at high-risk premises.

### **Services aren't giving prevention work sufficient priority**

23. In Round 1 inspections, 11 of the 13 services had at least one area for improvement in respect of their prevention work. These services also needed to do more to improve how they established who was at greatest risk of fire and other emergencies.
24. Levels of prevention activity are declining, and targeting is poor. Some services are carrying out unjustifiably low levels of prevention work. This does not reflect the level of priority set out in their Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs).
25. Evaluation remains a weakness for the sector. Many services are still not doing enough to evaluate their prevention activities. Only 3 of the 13 services inspected had adequately evaluated their prevention activity. The remaining ten services inspected had carried out either no or limited evaluation.

### **Safeguarding awareness has improved**

26. HMICFRS encourage all services to provide safeguarding awareness training to all staff, and not only to frontline firefighters and specialist prevention teams who are most frequently in contact with the public.

### **Services are well prepared to respond to routine incidents**

27. HMICFRS are encouraged to see an improvement in the availability of trained and competent incident commanders who can deal with a wide range of emergencies.
28. There are concerns that some services cannot sufficiently assure themselves that their control rooms are adequately set up to handle multiple fire survival guidance calls or are able to adequately exchange real-time risk information with incident commanders. It is important that control rooms are resourced appropriately and that services have fall back arrangements in place.

### **More needs to be done to improve the on-call crewing model**

29. More needs to be done to improve the on-call crewing model. HMICFRS continue to be worried that the sector has not been able to significantly improve the recruitment, retention and availability of on-call firefighters.

### **Concerned about the resilience of the marauding terrorist attack arrangements in place at some services**

30. HMICFRS state that all services and firefighters must be prepared to respond to a marauding terrorist attack (MTA). HMICFRS are concerned about the resilience of the MTA arrangements in place at some services. Services must make sure that they are able to respond, quickly and effectively, to an MTA. Their procedures for responding to an MTA must be understood by all staff and properly tested. Currently, not all services have in place sufficiently robust arrangements to pay for this capability. Some services use overtime while others resort to additional responsibility allowances.
31. Cross-border training is still below pre-pandemic levels In Round 1, inspections found that services weren't doing enough joint exercises with neighbouring services to make sure their equipment and ways of working were aligned.

### **There is still an inconsistent approach to identifying and mitigating risk**

32. In many of the services recently inspected, prevention, protection and response work continue to take place in isolation. These principal areas of work are generally not sufficiently co-ordinated with each other to mitigate the main risks set out in IRMPs.

### **Some services need to improve how they collect and disseminate risk information**

33. During 2021 inspections, HMICFRS examined in detail the range of risk information that was collected and passed on to firefighters, incident commanders and control room staff. This is an area where HMICFRS have placed great emphasis, following the recommendations made in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report.
34. There are concerns that some services haven't sufficiently prioritised making sure up-to-date risk information is available for firefighters, incident commanders and control room staff. Disappointingly, in some services, it was found that control room staff didn't have immediate access to the same risk information available to incident commanders at the incident in question.

## **EFFICIENCY**

- How well does the FRS use its resources to manage risk?
- How well is the FRS securing an affordable way of managing the risk of fire and other risks, now and in the future?

### **Services are mitigating financial risks**

35. Most services have a sound understanding of what financial difficulties they are likely to face in the future. HMICFRS saw realistic assumptions made in respect of budgets, as well as examples of scenario planning in service plans and investment in future innovation. But some services only produce financial plans for the year ahead. Their plans are reactive rather than proactive and make immediate short-term rather than long-term financial decisions. Some services rely too much on their reserves to support revenue budgets, rather than use this money productively to support new ways of working.
36. Too many services have plans which aren't consistent with the risks and priorities in their IRMPs. This is significantly hindering their efficiency.

### **Fleet and estate strategies should be aligned to IRMPs**

37. HMICFRS are disappointed that many services either don't have fleet and estate strategies in place or that these strategies are inconsistent with their IRMPs.

### **Control room continuity plans need regular testing**

38. Most services don't test their control room continuity arrangements often enough. Many services haven't tested a full evacuation of their control rooms since before the pandemic; in some cases, it has been much longer. This means that staff aren't fully aware of what they should do if an evacuation is needed.

## **PEOPLE**

- How well does the FRS promote its values and culture?
- How well trained and skilled are the FRS staff?
- How well does the FRS ensure fairness and diversity?
- How well does the FRS develop leadership and capability?

### **Values are better understood and demonstrated**

39. In Round 1, HMICFRS found few services that had both unambiguous values and a clear indication of acceptable workplace behaviours. As a result, staff didn't properly understand these values and there were many instances of poor behaviour. In 2021 inspections, HMICFRS was encouraged to find services have made the greatest improvement in this area. Work to promote and prioritise values and culture at all levels of fire and rescue services is well under way.

### **Health and safety and wellbeing provision are prioritised**

40. In almost all services inspected, staff wellbeing and health and safety continue to be priorities. In almost all services inspected, it was found that, in general, staff had high confidence in the wide range of support available to them and that staff understood procedures and policies well.
41. There are, however, some areas where policies on absences fall short, some services may find it difficult to identify trends in absences. Some services would also benefit from management training in order to better deal with staff absences.
42. Some services still don't have adequate oversight of the hours their staff are working and staff are expected to manage Working Time Directive compliance themselves. It is imperative that services have systems in place to effectively monitor the secondary employment, dual contracts and overtime arrangements of their workforces, to make sure working arrangements are safe and to minimise work stress.

### **Good intentions to promote equality, diversity and inclusion aren't always successful**

43. In some cases, it wasn't clear what services hoped to achieve with their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategies. Services either didn't use equality impact assessments and staff networks, or that they used them inconsistently. There was a lack of information and training on EDI, including among managers, and a poor understanding of it by staff. Services must do more to make sure that their people understand the importance of diversity and why it is necessary.

44. The workforces of all services remain woefully unrepresentative of many of the communities that they serve, and services should do more to recruit people from diverse backgrounds. To truly understand whether progress is being made to attract more diversity into the sector, we need services to gather more detailed data and make sure that staff feel comfortable providing this information.

### **Lack of workforce planning**

45. There is some concern that some services continue to operate without a clear understanding of the skills and capabilities of their workforces. Ineffective, reactive or narrow planning can lead to some areas being understaffed. In their planning, services should anticipate any potential staff shortages and factor these in.

### **Not enough is being done to plan for future leaders**

46. It is crucial that succession planning for leaders includes the need to consider a diverse range of individuals. Services should also develop their staff and provide consistent and fair opportunities as part of their workforce succession planning. This will help to make sure their staff have the skills they need to be able to do their jobs and take on more senior roles in the future. In some services, operational, corporate and support staff didn't always have the same development and promotion opportunities, with the balance being tipped in favour of operational staff. Many on-call staff didn't feel that they had the same development opportunities as other staff.
47. For a list of key 'Areas for Improvement', 'Causes of Concern' and 'Innovative Practices', please see Appendix A.
48. The full State of Fire and Rescue report can be found at [State of Fire and Rescue – The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2021 - HMICFRS \(justiceinspectors.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/state-of-fire-and-rescue-2021)

### **CONTRIBUTION TO OUR ASPIRATIONS**

- Be a great place to work-** we will create the right culture, values and behaviours to make this a brilliant place to work that is inclusive for all
- Put people first-** we will spend money carefully, use our resources wisely and collaborate with others to provide the best deal to the communities we serve
- Strive to be the best in everything we do-** we will work with others, make the most of technology and develop leaders to become the very best at what we can be

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION**

- Yes
- No

If you have ticked 'Yes' please provide brief details in the box below and include the third party/parties it would involve:



## CORPORATE RISK ASSESSMENT AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY IMPLICATIONS

49. SYFR need to ensure they have the capacity and capability to implement any recommendations in the State of Fire and Rescue report and continuously improve.

### EQUALITY ANALYSIS COMPLETED

Yes

If you have ticked 'Yes' please complete the below comment boxes providing details as follows:

Summary of any Adverse Impacts Identified:	Key Mitigating Actions Proposed and Agreed:

No

N/A

If you have ticked 'No' or 'N/A' please complete the comments box below providing details of why an EA is not required/is outstanding:

If required, an equality assessment has been/ will be completed for the agreed recommendations.

### HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT COMPLETED

Yes

No

N/A

If you have ticked 'No' or 'N/A' please complete the comments box below providing details of why a Health and Safety Risk Assessment is not required/is outstanding:

If required, a health and safety risk assessment has been/ will be completed for the agreed recommendations.

### SCHEME OF DELEGATION

50. Under the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority [Scheme of Delegation](#) a decision \*is required / \*has been approved at Service level.

Delegated Power

Yes

No

If yes, please complete the comments box indicating under which delegated power.

--

### IMPLICATIONS

51. Consider whether this report has any of the following implications and if so, address them below: Diversity, Financial, Asset Management, Environmental and Sustainability, Fleet, Communications, ICT, Health and Safety, Data Protection, Collaboration, Legal and Industrial Relations implications have been considered in compiling this report.

<b>List of background documents</b>		
State of Fire and Rescue 2021, HMICFRS Round 2, Tranche 1 Reports.		
Report Author:	Name:	Spencer Rowland, GM Service Improvement Officer
	e-mail:	<a href="mailto:srowland@syfire.gov.uk">srowland@syfire.gov.uk</a>
	Tel no:	0114 253 2206