

Jonathan Dyson  
Chief Fire Officer  
North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service

cc. Zoe Metcalfe  
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

19 October 2023

Dear Jonathan,

## **North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service: causes of concern – assessment of progress**

During March and May 2022, we inspected North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. During our inspection, we identified two causes of concern. In December 2022, we outlined the details of these in our letter to the chief fire officer and we gave the following causes of concern and accompanying recommendations.

### **Cause of concern**

The service doesn't have in place robust processes to ensure transformation activities provide efficiency and effectiveness.

### **Recommendation**

By September 2022, the service should put in place plans that are designed to:

- detail in its medium-term financial plan the efficiencies that its transformation plans will bring for the service;
- make sure that its processes for working with other organisations are effective, provide value for money and benefits for the public, and don't negatively affect the service; and
- monitor, review and evaluate its collaboration activities, such as enabling services, to make sure they achieve best value for money and are beneficial for both the service and the public.

## **Cause of concern**

The service doesn't have in place adequate workforce planning processes. This means that areas such as safety-critical training, succession planning, absence and work-time management don't support its current and future integrated risk management plan.

## **Recommendation**

By September 2022, the service should have put plans in place that are designed to:

- review its current workforce, succession and training planning to make sure these are provided efficiently and effectively;
- review and develop its current absence management policy and process;
- develop a policy and process to manage the working time of its staff;
- make sure that data and processes are in place to regularly assess and manage the capacity and capability of all staff groups; and
- carry out a skills gap analysis to make sure all staff have the skills and training they need to perform their roles.

In January 2023, we carried out a revisit to review progress against the recommendations to address both causes of concern.

On 30 January 2023, you submitted an action plan setting out how you would address the areas of concern and our recommendations. We reviewed the action plan, and in our letter of 19 April 2023, we acknowledged the progress the service was making.

Between 4 and 7 September 2023, we visited again to further review progress. During this revisit, we interviewed the staff who were responsible for developing the action plan, including you as the chief fire officer.

We also interviewed managers and staff with responsibility for assurance, service improvement and training, together with colleagues from their teams. We carried out further interviews with the newly appointed assistant chief officer of the [Enable North Yorkshire](#) (Enable) collaboration, along with middle managers who use this support function. Enable is a collaboration between your service, North Yorkshire Police and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

On 13 September 2023, we concluded the revisit by giving you our initial findings. This letter provides an update on those findings.

## Governance

We were pleased to find appropriate and robust governance arrangements in place to monitor the progress of your action plan. This progress includes:

- monthly HMICFRS reporting meetings;
- bimonthly risk and assurance committee meetings with direct reporting to the senior leadership team;
- regular updates to the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner; and
- the service's appointment of a dedicated assistant chief officer to represent fire within its support function of Enable.

## Action plan

The service has an updated action plan that covers the two causes of concern. Its inspection improvement plan, which relates to the action plan, identifies senior responsible officers, deadlines and specific action owners. This plan includes updates on all actions. Some examples are as follows:

- There is a simplified action plan, which is regularly reviewed. It clearly states our recommendations and actions to be taken against them. All actions have a specific deadline.
- Responsible officers have been allocated to specific areas of our framework. This also adheres to [national fire standards](#).
- The service has made significant progress against the action plan. Senior leaders oversee this progress and monitor any outstanding actions.
- The service has aligned actions within the plan and has a full understanding of how the actions relate to each cause of concern. It has also aligned the [risk and resource model](#) with the workforce plan, which has given the service a better understanding of future requirements.

## Progress against the causes of concern

The service has made notable progress to implement several changes that are already having a positive effect on the provision of enabling services. These are given below.

### **The service doesn't have in place robust processes to ensure transformation activities provide efficiency and effectiveness**

The service's performance management system and governance framework have been strengthened.

The support function, Enable, has been restructured. The role of managing director has been replaced by an assistant chief officer who reports directly to the deputy chief fire officer. This is to clarify accountability and separate fire and police structures. A planned review later this year will also help to decide future direction of Enable. It will build on the changes made since our visit in January 2023, including the decision to

change the model for its business design and assurance function. This should make sure that there is an appropriate focus on fire-related needs and requirements.

The service's medium-term financial plan shows a balanced budget that incorporates the efficiencies and savings to be generated from the risk and resource model. The service has confirmed that the savings identified will be reinvested as planned.

### **The service doesn't have in place adequate workforce planning processes**

The service has made progress in further upgrading its data and processes to support how staff capacity and capability are managed. The service has upgraded some of its systems and they are used to support the process it has established to monitor the working time of staff. In particular, the following improvements have been made:

- The service is now fully informed on workforce data and has carried out a skills gap analysis.
- The service has approved a two-year training plan in line with [national operational guidance](#) and incorporated it into its budget.
- The service's workforce and training plans now identify necessary succession planning and recruitment requirements.
- The service has added timelines to its skills-focused training plan according to date of expiry and in advance of deadlines.
- The service has addressed the number of temporary posts and has successfully appointed permanent staff to a middle-management level.
- Further promotion processes are ongoing in line with the phased approach to future staffing requirements.

The service has reviewed its absence management policy and procedure, and it has approved this with the trade unions. A trial is due to begin in October 2023 and it is expected to be fully implemented by December 2023.

### **Conclusion**

I am pleased to see the significant steps that the service has taken in response to the causes of concern we issued. The strengthened working relationships between the enabling services have helped to change the working culture and improve staff understanding of the benefits that the collaboration can provide. We saw evidence that showed the improvements made are sustainable and that they will continue to be monitored at a senior level.

The service recognises that there is still more work to do, particularly in refining the processes to monitor and evaluate the services provided by Enable. However, the steps taken since our previous visit reassure us that there is a much-improved position regarding enabling services and the benefits they bring to the service.

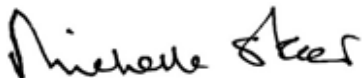
The risk and resource model, and the actions within it, are in progress and aim to lead to change and create efficiencies to further benefit the service. During our inspection, the service told us that it had managed this change effectively, and that it had a minimal negative effect on the staff involved.

The service has reviewed and developed processes in relation to its workforce and is improving data and updating systems to support and develop this further. The absence management policy and procedure is expected to be implemented imminently, and we look forward to reviewing this in the future.

We recognise the considerable work carried out to support these improvements. As a result, we now consider both causes of concern to be resolved. We will, however, continue to monitor them during our scheduled inspection of the service in 2024 as part of our established inspection methodology.

This letter will be published on our website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Skeer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Michelle Skeer**

His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

His Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services