

Fire & Rescue Service 2023–25

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service

Contents

Changes to this round of inspection	1
Overall summary	2
Service in numbers	4
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	6
Main findings	6
Preventing fires and other risks	9
Promising practice	9
Main findings	10
Protecting the public through fire regulation	14
Area for improvement	14
Main findings	14
Responding to fires and other emergencies	20
Main findings	20
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	25
Areas for improvement	25
Main findings	25
Making best use of resources	29
Main findings	29
Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	34
Area for improvement	34
Main findings	34
Promoting the right values and culture	38
Areas for improvement	38
Main findings	38

Getting the right people with the right skills	42
Main findings	42
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	45
Area for improvement	45
Main findings	45
Managing performance and developing leaders	49
Main findings	49

Changes to this round of inspection

We [last inspected North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service in April 2022](#). And in January 2023, we published our inspection report with our findings on the service's effectiveness and efficiency and how well it looks after its people. We followed this up with a [re-inspection in January 2023 and September 2023](#) to specifically consider the [cause of concern](#) that was previously issued for efficiency and people. And we published our findings in October 2023.

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

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

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

HMI summary

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

The service is a mainly rural service that provides fire and rescue cover across the largest county in England, covering 3,200 square miles.

Since our last inspection, it has embraced a change in governance. The new combined authority of York and North Yorkshire introduced its first elected mayor.

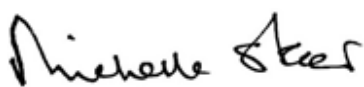
I am pleased with the performance of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service in keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks. For example, the service is making improvements to modernise and update processes and procedures across the organisation. To achieve this, it has made organisational change with minimal financial impact, using a 'save to invest' approach.

We were pleased to see that the service has made significant progress since our 2022 inspection, with improvements being made in most areas. I would like to commend the strategic leadership team and all staff across the service for their willingness to change and their continued commitment to improvement.

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

- The introduction of the workforce planning board has allowed the service to understand its future resource needs and foresee its succession planning requirements.
- To support workforce planning the service has introduced and established its leadership programmes; these equip staff with the skills and knowledge they need to progress in the organisation.
- The service has committed to improving values and culture throughout the organisation by implementing the [Core Code of Ethics](#).
- The service has commissioned an academically researched project, which will provide a framework for cultural change and behavioural improvement; the project aims to co-develop a toolkit that will guide strategic leaders on what matters to their employees when implementing change.

Overall, I am pleased with how North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service has improved since our last inspection. I encourage it to continue to improve in the areas we have highlighted and look forward to seeing how this benefits the public and the organisation in future.



Michelle Skeer

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Service in numbers



Profile

	North Yorkshire	England
Area Square miles	3,209	50,370
Population (thousands) 30 June 2023	834	57,690
Population density Thousands per square mile	0.3	1.1



Cost

Funding Year ending 31 March 2023	£35.4m	£2.5bn
Expenditure per population Year ending 31 March 2023	£44.08	£46.66

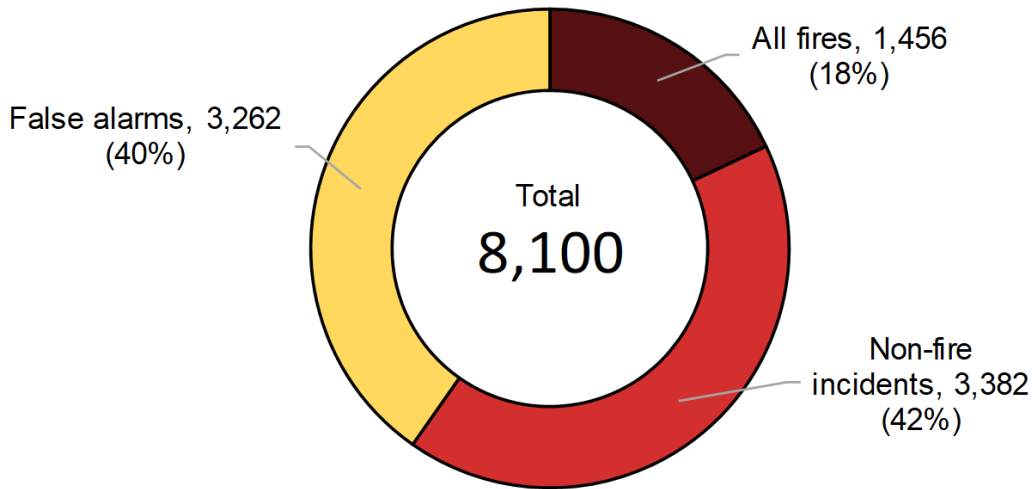


Response

Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 30 June 2024	9.7	10.3
Home fire safety visits carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2024	4.4	9.8
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2024	3.3	2.0
Availability of wholetime pumps Year ending 31 March 2024	95.0%	
Availability of on-call pumps Year ending 31 March 2024	68.0%	



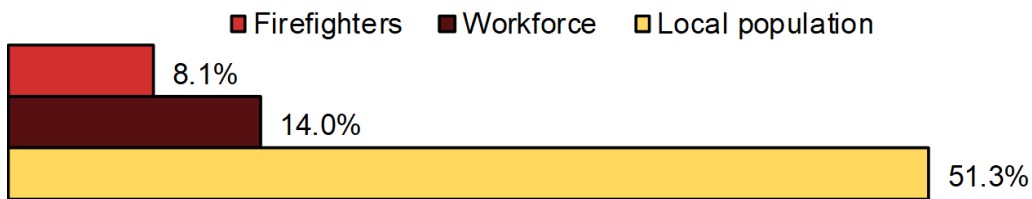
Incidents attended in year ending 30 June 2024



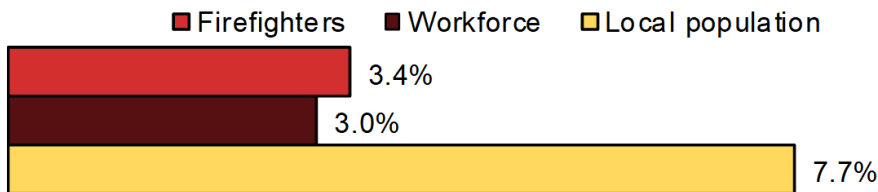
Workforce

	North Yorkshire	England
Five-year change in total workforce 2019 to 2024	-11.3%	1.9%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2024	0.74	0.60
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2024	49.0%	65.8%

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



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



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

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies

Good

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at understanding risk.

Each fire and rescue service should identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks that could affect its communities. It should use its protection and response capabilities to prevent or mitigate these risks for the public.

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

Main findings

The service has improved how it identifies risk

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. For example, it has produced a detailed community risk profile that identifies risks in North Yorkshire. This is based on datasets such as Home Office statistics, [indices of multiple deprivation](#), North Yorkshire Local Insight, Department for Transport and North Yorkshire collision data, the government's flood map and datasets from the Office for National Statistics. The service has used a company called Operational Research in Health to make sure risk assessment is targeted at the right areas and to provide further insights.

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 held a 12-week consultation process, which collected the opinions of employees of the service, partner organisations and members of the public. Using technology to better inform the public, the service organised pop-up video information sessions in high-traffic public areas. These sessions were further supported by face-to-face discussions. This interaction allowed the service to answer any questions the public had and provided opportunities for feedback. The service

also carried out an online survey, which received 1,378 responses, and arranged three public focus groups to allow for feedback.

The service has improved its risk and resource model, but it could do more

The service refers to its [community risk management plan \(CRMP\)](#) as its risk and resource model (RRM).

Once it has assessed risks, the service records its findings in an easily understood RRM. In this plan, the service describes how it intends to use its prevention, protection and response activities to mitigate or reduce the risks and threats the community faces both now and in the future. The RRM covers organisational plans for 2022–25. So at the time of our inspection it was nearing its completion date, and the service had already acted on its objectives. For example, the service has upskilled some of its staff in both prevention and protection activities, to further support the reduction of risk in these areas. Operational staff support the completion of [home fire safety visits](#) and complete fire audits to an appropriate level.

However, the RRM doesn't identify key performance indicators for staff to work towards. The service recognises the need to understand how each fire station's workload is aligned to its staff. It has therefore worked with managers to set realistic targets for each station to achieve.

The service has also taken a strategic approach to evaluate the RRM for best practice. The evaluation results will allow the service to replace it with a CRMP in 2025.

The service effectively gathers, maintains and shares risk information

The service routinely collects and updates the information it has about the highest-risk people, places and threats it has identified. This includes exchanging information with partner agencies, such as the NHS and North Yorkshire Council adult social care, to identify [vulnerable people](#) in the community, and carrying out risk assessment visits to industrial and commercial premises.

We sampled a broad range of the risk information the service collects, including building risk information and risks associated with annual community events.

This information is readily available for the service's prevention, protection and response staff. This means these teams can identify, reduce and mitigate risk effectively. The service identified a need for improvement in this area and has taken steps to make sure that risk information is timely and available across the service. For example, it has improved the process for collecting and collating relevant information from site-specific risk information visits. Improvements include:

- a new risk manager;
- a new central tracking system;

- performance dashboard monitoring for all staff;
- a clear governance structure that involves reporting to the organisational effectiveness board;
- a weekly task and finish group meeting;
- an evaluation report on the site-specific risk information progress; and
- a clear reporting structure to raise outstanding work with district managers through the service delivery board.

In addition, a dedicated resource capabilities team is integral to the overall process. It supports each department to make sure information is collated and shared in a timely and consistent way across the organisation. Staff told us there are no timescales associated with the process, but information is readily available when required.

Where appropriate, the service shares risk information with other organisations, such as local authorities, health professionals and other emergency services.

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

The service has used operational activity to inform changes in its emergency response capabilities

The service records and communicates risk information effectively. It also routinely updates risk assessments and uses feedback from local and national operational activities to inform its planning assumptions. For example, based on local risk and operational data, the service has introduced specialist capabilities to stations in certain locations. These include implementing specialist water capabilities and training staff where the risk of water incidents is high.

Preventing fires and other risks

Good

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

Fire and rescue services must promote fire safety, including giving fire safety advice. To identify people at greatest risk from fire, services should work closely with other organisations in the public and voluntary sectors, and with the police and ambulance services. They should share [intelligence](#) and risk information with these other organisations when they identify vulnerability or exploitation.

Promising practice

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service offers water safety education to the community using a flume produced in collaboration with partners

The service has worked with charity and commercial partners to design and produce a flume to increase awareness of the risks of water. The bespoke Perspex design can be adapted to simulate the conditions of common attractions in North Yorkshire such as waterfalls, weirs, strids and culverts. Using a toy figure to simulate a person, the flume shows the effects water has on the body and the dangers that lie hidden.

The service has recognised that some visitors to its beauty spots are from neighbouring counties. It has worked with neighbouring services to raise further awareness of water safety using the flume. It has also provided educational videos with both subtitles and commentary in other languages to improve understanding across the community.

The service has led 141 water safety sessions for about 1,900 people at venues and events such as universities, scout groups, York Pride and station open days. It carries out questionnaires to assess the effectiveness of the education provided.

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

Main findings

The service's prevention strategy influences activity

The service's prevention strategy is clearly linked to the risks it has identified in its RRM. The service has used data to identify vulnerable people and risk in its communities. The strategy considers risk such as fire, road traffic and water.

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 introduced post-incident engagement. This activity involves the prevention department working with operational crews to raise awareness of fire safety with all residents after attending [dwelling fires](#). Activity can include fire safety leaflet distribution or a full home fire safety visit.

The service is effectively targeting activity at risk

The service uses a risk-based approach to clearly prioritise its prevention activity towards people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. For example, the service has reviewed data on how it responds to dwelling fires. This highlighted the time taken to attend incidents in more rural locations. Using this data, the service has implemented a trial that involves its prevention team providing fire safety interventions to premises a long way from their local fire station. These allow operational crews to focus on more urban areas while remaining available to respond to incidents.

The service uses a broad range of information and data to target its prevention activity at vulnerable individuals and groups. It is using data sources to assure itself it is targeting those most vulnerable. We were encouraged to see the introduction of an automated system, Safelincs, for booking home fire safety visits. This has led to a more efficient way for the service to receive home fire safety visit referrals because they are categorised by the associated risks.

In the year ending 31 March 2024, according to Home Office data, the service made 3,666 home fire safety visits. This is a marginal increase on the 3,546 recorded in the previous year. However, using Safelincs assures the service that all home fire safety visits are targeted at those most vulnerable.

The service has also obtained data from partners, such as City of York Council and North Yorkshire Police, that identifies vulnerable premises throughout the county. At the time of our inspection, the data was undergoing qualitative assurance. We look forward to seeing the impact the data has on how the service mitigates risk in the future.

The service carries out a range of interventions, which it adapts to the level of risk in its communities. For example, it works with partners including North Yorkshire Police, North Yorkshire Council and National Highways to raise awareness of the importance of road safety, providing education through initiatives such as [Biker Down](#) and FireBike. FireBike involves dedicated staff using decommissioned police traffic motorcycles to attend risk locations to provide road safety advice to road users.

Staff are competent in preventative activity

Staff told us they have the right skills and confidence to make home fire safety visits. These visits cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put vulnerable people at greater risk from fire and other emergencies. The service has a varied training schedule for prevention staff to further their knowledge in areas such as home fire safety, post-incident engagement, first aid and conflict resolution.

The service is also providing home fire safety visit training to some operational crews across the county. It would benefit the service if all on-call stations became proactive in preventative activity.

During our inspection we identified that there were inconsistencies in how staff interpret the home fire safety visit policy. The policy specifies timescales for action depending on the risk rating. For example, the policy states staff should complete visits to very high-risk premises in one week, and complete visits to high-risk premises in two weeks. Some staff understand this to mean they should try to contact a very high-risk premises and complete a visit in one week. Even if that attempt is unsuccessful, the case would then be closed after seven days. Other staff understand they should try to make contact in the first week. If the attempt is unsuccessful, attempts should continue, so long as the initial attempt is in the first seven days.

The service should assure itself that risk priorities and timescales are clear to all staff to make sure it has a consistent approach and risk is mitigated appropriately.

The service has an effective process to respond to safeguarding concerns

Staff we interviewed told us about occasions when they had identified [safeguarding](#) problems. They told us they feel confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly. All staff receive safeguarding training, which includes how to report concerns about both adults and [children](#). The service has a dedicated safeguarding officer to support and oversee processes.

The service works with partners to share risk information

The service works with a wide range of other organisations to prevent fires and other emergencies. These include:

- the NHS;
- Baywater Healthcare;
- North Yorkshire Council adult social care;
- City of York Council;
- Carers Plus Yorkshire;
- Living Well;
- North Yorkshire Police; and
- memory and dementia clinics.

We found good evidence that the service routinely refers people at greatest risk to organisations that may better meet their needs. These organisations include North Yorkshire Council adult social care, Warm & Well in North Yorkshire, North Yorkshire Citizens Advice & Law Centre, Dementia Forward, and the Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust falls prevention team. Arrangements are also in place to receive referrals from others. And the service acts appropriately on the referrals it receives. For example, in the year ending 31 March 2024, the service made 1,549 prevention visits which were referrals from other agencies.

The service routinely exchanges information with other public sector organisations about people and groups at greatest risk. It uses this information to challenge planning assumptions and target prevention activity. For instance, through its collaboration with North Yorkshire Police, the service has established better partnership working using its joint road safety partnership officer. This role has provided the service with benefits including access to road safety data, collaborative risk-targeted prevention activity and regular meetings to highlight trends.

The service has effective interventions to tackle fire-setting behaviour

The service has a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people with different needs who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. This includes the Fire Safe intervention programme, which promotes fire safety awareness. Other interventions are the Crucial Crew events – a joint programme of prevention awareness sessions and the Fire Cadets. The service also runs a LIFE course for young people. This is an intensive five-day course that aims to develop resilience and confidence using a range of activities.

When appropriate, the service routinely shares information with relevant organisations to support the prosecution of arsonists. These organisations include the police, schools, youth offending teams and pupil referral units. The service works in partnership with these to reduce fire-setting behaviour by providing education.

The service has improved its evaluation processes

The service has good evaluation tools in place to measure how effective its activity is and to make sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to the prevention services that meet their needs. For example, the service has implemented a tool to evaluate how people's behaviour has changed because of the education the service has provided on subjects such as fire safety, road safety and water safety.

Prevention activities take account of feedback from the public, other organisations and other parts of the service. For example, the service uses the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#)'s (NFCC) evaluation form when contacting members of the public who have received a home fire safety visit. This allows the service to evaluate the quality of the visit and the knowledge of the occupant after the visit.

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

Protecting the public through fire regulation

Adequate

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at protecting the public through fire regulation.

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

Area for improvement

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

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

Main findings

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

Staff across the service are involved in protection activity, effectively exchanging information as needed. For example, the service has trained some operational crews to level 3 in fire safety auditing and is using these staff members to support the lower-risk audits throughout the county. The service uses information to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between its protection, prevention and response functions. This means resources are aligned to risk. Where hazards are identified, they are escalated to an appropriately qualified member of the protection team for further investigation.

The service should make sure level 3 trained staff are used where possible to carry out audits and fully support the protection department.

The service is implementing a new risk-based inspection programme to realign service activity to risk

The service's risk-based inspection programme (RBIP) is focused on the service's highest-risk buildings. At the time of our inspection, we reviewed how the service was switching to a new RBIP. The service's risk management software categorises premises according to risk. Aligning to NFCC guidance, it considers 'sleeping risks', such as hotels, and premises where vulnerable people may be living, including care homes and high-rise residential buildings. It also considers other risk factors such as high-risk premises. When categorising the risk, the new RBIP will take account of buildings that have shown high compliance during previous inspections.

Operational crews support the protection department by completing fire safety interventions. These are visits to premises in the RBIP which are categorised by risk. The crews visit premises to make sure they are compliant with fire safety regulations and to assess risk on behalf of the protection department. This allows protection staff to focus their time on the priority risks that have been highlighted that may require immediate action.

The service is in the process of cross-referencing risk data to the new RBIP to assure itself it is managing the transition of risk allocation effectively.

As the new RBIP isn't fully established or understood throughout the service, we look forward to seeing during our next inspection the impact it has on the service.

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

Audits are completed to a good standard

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

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

The audits we reviewed were completed to a high standard in a consistent, systematic way and in line with the service's policies. In 2023/24, the service carried out 3.3 audits per 100 known premises. The England rate was 2.0. The service also achieved its target of auditing 125 high-risk premises, carrying out 134 high-risk audits.

The service makes relevant information from its audits available to operational teams and control room operators, using a centralised administration team.

The service has a new quality assurance process

The service carries out proportionate quality assurance of its protection activity. It does this using its newly implemented quality assurance process, which is linked to the NFCC competency framework. Protection team leaders carry out quality assurance audits. The assurance process reviews administration, contact with businesses before and after audit, procedural compliance and audit content. The process's scoring system allows managers to be consistent in their expected standard. Where the process identifies that the standard hasn't been met, managers have professional discussions with the relevant protection staff.

The service has good evaluation tools in place to measure how effective its activity is and to make sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to the protection services that meet their needs. In December 2024, it produced an evaluation report on 'The current risk protection works and strategic path for further improvements'. The report evaluated the service's RBIP against the proposal to align it with NFCC guidance. Following this evaluation, the service started a project to cleanse and manage the information in its risk management software to better understand the risk to premises across the service's area. It resourced the project using the protection uplift grant (a government grant to fire and rescue services). The service has also used the Operational Research in Health data to provide itself with further assurance in preparation for the transition to the NFCC-aligned RBIP.

To support its decision to align the new RBIP to the NFCC guidance, the service has carried out a productivity study of the protection team. The study assessed the team's capacity to meet the requirements of the new RBIP. It considered factors such as staff [continuing professional development](#), annual leave and time spent responding to ad hoc reports of non-compliance to understand the team's capacity and ability to meet future targets.

The service carries out some enforcement activity

The service has access to a full range of enforcement powers and trained staff to take legal action when necessary. It is supported by an agreement with North Yorkshire Council to provide legal advice. The service is committed to working with organisations to enhance their fire safety measures before resorting to legal action.

In the year ending 31 March 2024, the service issued 0 alteration notices, 542 informal notifications, 6 enforcement notices and 7 prohibition notices. It completed four prosecutions in the five years from 2019/20 to 2023/24.

The new RBIP will allow the service to target more effectively those buildings where there may be poor compliance. This may lead to increased enforcement activity. We look forward to reviewing the new ways of working during our next inspection.

Protection is well resourced

The service has enough qualified protection staff to meet the requirements of its RBIP. As at 31 March 2024 the service had 15 qualified protection staff dedicated to protection, with a further 7 in development. They include a mixture of protection managers and inspectors qualified to a level 4 diploma in fire safety, and fire safety advisors. The service has also developed staff from other departments to support the protection department's activity. For example, it has developed operational managers and [fire control](#) staff to a level 3 fire safety auditing certificate, and firefighters to a level 2 certificate. However, some staff told us that despite being qualified, their skills weren't used to the full.

A widely skilled workforce allows the service to provide the range of audit and enforcement activity needed, both now and in the future.

The service is supporting the work of the Building Safety Regulator

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

The service is supporting the introduction of the [Building Safety Regulator](#). The service has seconded a member of staff to carry out training and work on a regional level. It expects these arrangements to have a limited impact on its other protection activity.

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

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

The service works well with other enforcement agencies

The service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety and it routinely exchanges risk information with them. It was able to show how recent activity with Trading Standards had highlighted a lack of fire safety provision in some shops where a sleeping risk above was identified. Joint inspections have taken place, and this is now a consideration for the new RBIP when categorising risk.

The service regularly attends the [safety advisory group](#), which is attended by key partners throughout the county, such as North Yorkshire Police and Trading Standards, to discuss community events. It also shares risk information with the Care Quality Commission about changes detected during care home audits.

The service is effectively carrying out building consultations

The service responds to all building consultations on time. This means it consistently meets its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. In 2023/24 the service responded to 99.9 percent of building consultations (923 out of 924) and 100 percent of licensing consultations (873 out of 873) in the required timeframes.

The service works well with businesses

The service proactively works with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. Although it doesn't have a dedicated role for working with businesses, members of the protection team work together to provide safety advice where possible. For example, they worked with hotels, Airbnbs and holiday lets in preparation for the Tour de Yorkshire. In addition, the service works with housing associations to provide safety advice.

The service has an informative page on its website aimed at local businesses, which covers topics including:

- the Fire Safety Act 2021;
- the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022;
- landlord responsibilities;
- [primary authority schemes](#);
- secure information boxes; and
- reducing false alarms.

The service is working towards reducing unwanted fire signals

The service is taking some action to reduce the number of unwanted fire signals, although it could do more. On 1 April 2023, it introduced a new approach to challenging automatic fire alarms. This includes closer working with a building's responsible person, revised educational resources and training, and limiting attendance to buildings dependent on their risk.

In 2022/23 the number of automatic fire alarm calls that weren't attended as a proportion of the total number of requests to attend was 28.4 percent. In 2023/24 this figure improved to 40.8 percent, which was above the England average of 38.9 percent. The service believes this improvement is because of the increased involvement with building owners to provide education on the importance of this issue.

The service introduced a cost recovery model in April 2024. This allows the service to charge a premises owner after a number of unwanted fire signals if there has been no attempt to reduce them. However, at the time of our inspection this hadn't been used.

Not attending a greater proportion of automatic fire alarm requests means that fire engines will be available more often to respond to genuine incidents. It also reduces the risk to the public if fewer fire engines travel at high speed on the roads to respond to these requests.

Responding to fires and other emergencies

Good

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

Fire and rescue services must be able to respond to a range of incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies in their areas.

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

Main findings

The service has implemented a dynamic mobilising and cover tool

The service's response strategy is linked to the risks it has identified in its RRM. 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 is a mainly rural service and uses multiple working patterns to align its response to the risk.

To improve its response further, in December 2024, it invested in a dynamic [mobilising and cover tool](#) in fire control. This software, aligned with data analysis carried out by Operational Research in Health, allows the service to align resource to risk. Before, the service maintained a minimum number of fire engines across the county to assure effective response. Now, with the data-driven insights that the tool provides, the service can identify critical locations and the best placement of fire engines to respond to risk effectively and efficiently.

The service has implemented new response standards

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. But the service has set out its own response standards. To make sure it meets the needs of the public, it held a consultation for communities, employees and stakeholders to provide feedback on how the service would be held to account for its response to emergencies. As a result of the feedback, the service told us the following response standards were agreed in 2024:

- On average the service will aim to attend all dwelling fires in 11 minutes.
- On average the service will aim to attend all incidents in 13 minutes.

The service told us it had monitored the new standards for the first six months of their implementation. It provided data to show it was meeting them:

- On average it has attended all dwelling fires in 10 minutes and 29 seconds.
- On average it has attended all incidents in 12 minutes and 1 second.

The service is held to account for its performance in relation to the response standards in a monthly online public meeting, which is chaired by the York and North Yorkshire deputy mayor.

Since implementation, the service has made further improvements. For example, fire control monitors the length of each emergency call and the time taken for the fire engine to become mobile, and manages performance. This has improved how the service responds overall.

The service is making changes to improve its availability

The service's availability overall has declined. Since our last inspection, [wholetime](#) availability has decreased from 99.2 percent in 2021/22 to 95 percent in 2023/24. On-call availability has decreased from 79.1 percent in 2021/22 to 68 percent in 2023/24.

To support its response strategy, the service aims to always have fire engines available in key locations. The dynamic mobilising and cover tool will help to identify risk in the service's area and move fire engines accordingly. The software is new to the service, and staff were being trained at the time of our inspection. We look forward to seeing in our next inspection the impact of this tool on how the service maintains and improves its availability.

To further support the response strategy, the operational staffing reserve team consists of staff who work flexibly in different locations to improve availability. Team members work on weekdays from any station across the county to make sure key fire engines are available where crew numbers are insufficient. This way of working helps the service achieve its aim to have the required number of fire engines to meet the needs of its communities.

The service has effective command arrangements

The service has incident commanders who are trained and assessed regularly and properly. We found clear evidence of training and development for all incident commanders. This helps the service safely, assertively and effectively manage the whole range of incidents it could face, from small and routine ones to complex multi-agency incidents.

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

The service needs to provide opportunities for fire control staff to contribute to learning

During our inspection, fire control staff were in the process of implementing the dynamic mobilising and cover tool to help them effectively respond across the county. We look forward to understanding the impact of this change during our next inspection.

It is disappointing to see fire control staff aren't always included in command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity. Debriefs are often carried out on paper and lack control room-based elements. It would be helpful to fully involve fire control during the exercise and debriefing processes to maximise learning. The service is aware of this issue and is taking steps to address it.

The service has an effective process to manage risk information

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

The information we reviewed was mostly up to date and detailed. Staff could easily access and understand it and could access guidance on the intranet to provide consistency across the organisation. Encouragingly, it had been completed with input from the service's prevention, protection and response functions when appropriate. The service told us that when workloads were high, it formed a task and finish group to manage information input.

The service evaluates operational performance against national guidance

As part of the inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. These included dwelling fires, road traffic collisions and high-risk buildings.

We were pleased to see the service routinely follows its policies to make sure staff command incidents in line with operational guidance. It updates internal risk information with the information it receives. This information is readily available to crews on the [mobile data terminal](#) in each fire engine.

The service has a process to gather information through learning to improve operational response and incident command. Operational crews can feed back any information about incidents they have attended to make improvements. Due to the large area of the county and its varying duty systems, it isn't always feasible to reunite crews that have attended incidents to carry out a face-to-face debrief. We found evidence that, instead, crews debriefed incidents at the scene and used a debriefing form to centrally collate and review learning.

The service shares operational learning by distributing organisational bulletins. This method allows the service to communicate with staff across multiple duty systems. However, we found evidence that not all staff read or acknowledged they had understood the content of bulletins and were therefore missing the opportunity to learn. Some staff told us the changes or priorities in the bulletins weren't always clear and so identifying change could be time-consuming for staff. The service should assure itself all staff receive information, including risk-critical information, consistently and they understand the message to allow for feedback.

The service has responded to learning from incidents to improve its service for the public. For example, a case study of an incident was produced and presented to staff at a continuous professional development session for the county to enhance and share learning. The presentation included information gathered from the incident such as geographical and weather-related risk, initial actions, incident command decision-making and learning outcomes. It used various presentation formats for varied learning styles, including pictures and incident-related data. As a result of the findings of the case study, the service made changes to processes to improve operational activity.

We were encouraged to see the service is contributing towards, and acting on, learning from other fire and rescue services or operational learning gathered from emergency service partners. The service has a single point of contact to review and action all its submissions to [national operational learning \(NOL\)](#) and [joint organisational learning \(JOL\)](#). These are further reviewed at the organisational effectiveness board before being submitted as learning outcomes. Any learning received by the service is published throughout the organisation on the NOL/JOL dashboard on the intranet.

The service communicates effectively with the public

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 access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to the media function that is run as part of the support function collaboration. This is a collaboration for support functions with North Yorkshire Police and the crime and commissioning department (this department used to be part of the office of the police, fire and crime commissioner). Also, the control room has access to social media accounts to post information about ongoing incidents.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents

Adequate

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate 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).

Areas for improvement

The service needs to assure itself staff have the knowledge and understanding of marauding terrorist attacks to be effective in their response.

The service needs to provide operational training in high-rise buildings to assure itself it can command this incident type effectively.

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 improve its preparedness 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. The service attends regular meetings at a strategic, tactical and operational level with the [local resilience forum](#). Within the forum, the service acts as chair for both the risk and assurance group and the training and exercising group. These are responsible for the management of risks in the county and multi-agency training, respectively.

The service is also familiar with the significant risks neighbouring fire and rescue services may face, and which it might reasonably be asked to respond to in an emergency. These include water-related risks. Firefighters have access to risk information from neighbouring services. The service uses the [Resilience Direct](#) system for sharing and collating risk information, including content applicable to neighbouring services.

The service's interaction with other agencies has raised its awareness of how well it is prepared for a major incident. However, staff at most levels of the organisation told us they wouldn't feel confident when responding to incidents such as marauding terrorist attacks. Some staff were unable to describe the expectations of the service at this type of incident. The service should assure itself all staff are exposed to training and exercises of this type.

The service should provide practical high-rise training at all levels of command

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

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

We found the service has policies and procedures in place for safely managing this type of incident. The service has commissioned an external review to assure itself it has met the government's recommendations and the documents meet the required standard. However, during our inspection we found not all staff were aware of the service's policies and procedures, and live exercises involving this building type haven't taken place to test them. Although some staff have used desktop scenario learning and e-learning packages, this isn't consistent throughout the service. Most staff told us they wouldn't feel confident to attend this type of incident and would benefit from practical exercises to experience the potential complexities at all levels of command. Although the county has few buildings of this type, it is essential crews are confident and prepared to attend an incident of this nature.

At this type of incident, a fire and rescue service would receive a high volume of simultaneous fire calls. We found the service has systems and plans in place to manage a high volume of calls using national procedures. The service also has some resilience in operational crews who would be deployed to the control room to provide support.

Our inspectors observed the system in place to manage the transfer of information between the control room and the scene of the incident when a tall building is on fire. Specifically, the service showed inspectors the computer system that could be used to relay important information such as the people who are at greatest risk and need to be rescued. Staff told us information on the system could be accessed from both the control room and the incident command unit.

Due to the limited number of high-rise buildings, the service has the capacity to create pre-populated building plans. These can be accessed using Microsoft Teams by anyone in the service. When the information is entered or altered by fire control or incident command, this can be viewed straightaway by all staff involved in the incident to allow for planning and effective rescues to take place. However, some staff told us this had been tested only at a slow pace and not in a real incident so they were unsure of its effectiveness.

The service works effectively with other fire and rescue services

The service supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents. For example, it has successfully deployed staff to neighbouring services and has provided use of its high-volume pump at wildfire and flooding incidents. It is intraoperable with these services and can form part of a multi-agency response.

The service has improved its involvement in cross-border exercises

The service has a cross-border exercise plan with neighbouring fire and rescue services, helping them work together effectively to keep the public safe. Staff told us the service was improving how it carried out exercises with other services. The service gave us a schedule of cross-border exercises that had taken place with other services that test procedures for such things as using breathing apparatus, dealing with road traffic collisions and using the aerial ladder platform.

In 2023/24 the service carried out 13 exercises with neighbouring fire and rescue services, which was an increase from 9 in the previous year. Its rate of 23.4 exercises with neighbouring fire and rescue services per 1,000 full-time equivalent firefighters means it is broadly in line with the England rate of 25.7. However, there was limited evidence to show the service had recorded learning from these exercises to inform risk information and service plans.

The service understands and practises 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. This includes a tri-service (fire, police and ambulance) regional approach for the Yorkshire and Humber area, holding tactical and strategic group meetings and providing training across the services. The service also takes responsibility for co-ordinating JESIP training on behalf of the local resilience forum, through a strategic officer. The training is given by all emergency services at operational, tactical and strategic levels. It is also offered to the wider Yorkshire and Humber area.

We sampled a range of debriefs the service had carried out after multi-agency incidents and exercises. We were encouraged to find the service is identifying any problems it has with applying JESIP and taking appropriate, prompt action with other emergency services. We reviewed exercises that had taken place where the service had contributed to NOL by using a JESIP approach.

The service works effectively with partner organisations

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with partners that make up the North Yorkshire local resilience forum.

The service is a valued partner and staff from the service chair the risk and assurance group and the training and exercising group. The service takes part in regular training events with other members of the forum and uses the learning to develop planning assumptions about responding to major and multi-agency incidents. The service also takes responsibility for co-ordinating JESIP training on behalf of the forum.

There is a clear process to acknowledge and consider national learning

The service makes sure it knows about national operational updates from other fire and rescue services and JOL 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.

For all learning that the service plans to submit for NOL or JOL, it uses a process to provide quality assurance. Each item of learning is reviewed during the organisational effectiveness board meeting before submission.

Making best use of resources

Good

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at making best use of its resources.

Fire and rescue services should manage their resources properly and appropriately, aligning them with their risks and statutory responsibilities. Services should make best possible use of resources to achieve the best results for the public.

The service's revenue budget for 2024/25 is £45.2 million. This is a 9.1 percent increase from the previous financial year.

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

Main findings

The service effectively reviews and allocates resources to risk

We were encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since our last inspection. During our 2022 inspection we identified the need for the service to use its resources in a more co-ordinated way, and to make sure functions have shared objectives to meet the requirements of the RRM.

During this inspection we found the service's financial and workforce plans, including allocating resources to prevention, protection and response, are consistent with the risks and priorities it has identified in its RRM. For example, where the service has identified an increase in water risk, it has improved its staff resource and capability to mitigate this risk. Fifteen firefighters have received the required training to respond effectively to water incidents in the west and south of the service area. Additionally, work has taken place in the prevention department to demonstrate the service's new flume and provide water safety information.

The service has assessed how it responds to more rural properties and has prioritised distance from a station as a risk. As a result, it identified that it needed to better use its resources to carry out prevention and protection activity to meet this risk.

Operational crews now support the prevention department by making home fire safety visits in more urban areas. This allows prevention teams adequate time to travel to more remote, at-risk premises to make home fire safety visits. Operational crews also support the protection department by carrying out fire safety audits.

The service has evaluated its mix of crewing and duty systems. It has analysed its response cover and can show it deploys its fire engines and response staff to manage risk efficiently. The service has used Operational Research in Health to carry out a comprehensive review of its [risk modelling](#). This research has assured the service that it has the right mix of duty systems in place to meet its risk.

The service builds its plans on sound scenarios. They help make sure it is sustainable and are underpinned by financial controls that reduce the risk of misusing public money.

The service has reviewed changes in the RRM to duty systems

The service has undergone a change in governance since our last inspection. The York and North Yorkshire deputy mayor has taken over the responsibilities of the police, fire and crime commissioner. This change in governance has delayed the service's implementation of proposed changes to some duty systems as per the objectives of the RRM. During this time, the service has consulted with union representatives about the changes and made amendments to the proposal as a result of feedback.

The RRM originally proposed a reduced response from the second fire engine at both Harrogate and Scarborough fire stations. This reduction was from a wholetime response to an on-call response during peak periods. The service has since used historical data on incidents and times of daytime peak activity to support the following amendment: the second fire engine at Harrogate station will now use a day-crewing duty system, which means it will be available to respond immediately during daytime hours. This change still creates efficiencies for the service while meeting the risk to the public.

However, significant delays to the changes mean operational staff are on temporary contracts indefinitely. This is affecting operational activity, how managers plan training, staff rotas and performance.

The service should work with union representatives to finalise future working agreements as soon as possible.

The service has a mix of duty systems, which include wholetime, day crewing, on-call, self-rostering, volunteer stations and the use of an operational staffing reserve to increase availability. However, some staff told us local exercises were often cancelled as there weren't enough available fire engines to allow crews to come together to train.

The service understands the costs of its duty systems and how the use of the staffing reserve and temporary contracts affects the use of overtime. Its review of duty systems – including those at Harrogate and Scarborough – and its use of the staffing reserve has assured the service this is an efficient use of resources. The service also understands how duty systems affect workforce productivity. For example, it recognises the benefits of the day-crewing duty system and where possible has used this system.

The service is improving workforce productivity and ways of working

We were encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since our last inspection. We were pleased to see the service's arrangements for managing performance clearly link resource use to its RRM and its strategic priorities. The service is now using data and newly developed dashboards to understand workforce activity. This is supported by the introduction of station plans that guide workforce activity. Station plans include prevention and protection activities to reduce risk. The service has introduced a range of key performance indicators including home fire safety visits, protection audits and risk information gathering visits. This is a recent change and isn't fully understood by some operational crews or implemented across the service. All performance is monitored and managed at a strategic level at the service delivery performance meeting.

The service is taking some steps to understand how it uses its wholetime firefighters. For example, it has introduced the collection of performance data and data-driven dashboards to visually track the work they do across the service. This is new to the service and is undergoing quality assurance. However, it will help the service to further understand the capacity each station has to be more productive.

The service is also taking steps to make sure the workforce's time is as productive as possible. This includes putting in place new ways of working. For example, it has introduced post-incident engagement at all stations across the county. This involves a level of community interaction following dwelling fires, such as distributing fire safety literature or making a home fire safety visit. A central team monitors post-incident engagement twice daily using the fire control incident summary. This makes sure all incidents are subject to fire safety interaction when required at the time of the incident. In addition, we were encouraged to see some on-call stations carried out proactive home fire safety visits. However, this isn't fully implemented across the service.

The service collaborates effectively with other agencies

We were pleased to see the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate. It routinely considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. For example, it has brought together its support functions with those of North Yorkshire Police and the crime and commissioning department (this department used to be part of the office of the police, fire and crime commissioner). We refer to this arrangement as the support function collaboration. Shared support functions include human resources, IT, estates, finance and business planning.

Collaborative work is aligned to the priorities in the RRM. For example, the service works closely with partners in the local resilience forum, the York and North Yorkshire Road Safety Partnership, community safety partnerships and district community safety hubs. However, due to the restructuring of the local district councils into a combined authority, some of these partnerships have been affected and the activity is inconsistent across the service at both tactical and strategic levels. The service should realign with community safety partnerships and hubs to provide a consistent approach across the service.

The service has access to a joint road safety partnership officer as part of the support function collaboration with North Yorkshire Police. Working with the police, the service aims to reduce injury on the roads to both residents and visitors. An example of this work is the FireBike initiative. Using decommissioned police traffic motorcycles, service staff target areas of risk to motorcyclists, to promote road safety advice and advanced rider techniques. In total, FireBike involved 1,177 hours of community involvement and road safety activity in its first year of operation.

The service reviews and evaluates the benefits of its collaborations

The service comprehensively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations. Notable results include the review of the service's support function collaboration and the efficiency benefits. The service commissioned an external, independent review across the service including support functions. The service told us the review identified savings of £460,000 under the collaboration. This finding is based on a comparison with other fire and rescue services for the same functions. The service told us it was satisfied with the structure of the collaboration and assured that it provided value for money.

The performance of the support function collaboration is also reported to the service's strategic leadership team. Since our last inspection, the service has appointed an assistant chief officer who represents it in the support function collaboration and is accountable to the chief fire officer for the performance of the functions.

Results of the external review identified a need to invest in support functions to make sure all the benefits are realised. At the time of our inspection, the service told us strategic leaders would approve the investment priorities as part of the budget-setting process for 2025/26.

The service has good continuity arrangements, which it tests regularly

The service has good continuity arrangements in place for areas in which it considers threats and risks to be high. It regularly reviews and tests these threats and risks so that staff know the arrangements and their associated responsibilities. It has a range of plans for risks that include industrial action, extreme weather and loss of IT systems. It also has specific continuity plans for individual departments. Exercises to test these plans have included a flooding exercise during November and December 2024, using a tactical co-ordination centre at the service headquarters.

The testing schedule includes cyber continuity exercises in conjunction with North Yorkshire Police. These thematic exercises are held quarterly.

The service is improving its financial management

We were encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since our last inspection.

There are regular reviews to consider all the service's expenditure, including its non-pay costs. And this scrutiny makes sure the service gets value for money. For example, the strategic leadership team reviews and scrutinises financial performance at its meetings. It compares actual expenditure with forecast expenditure, and looks to see where the service is underspending or overspending. In addition, the service has changed its internal audit arrangements. And it has made improvements to its internal governance and reporting arrangements for responding to internal audit recommendations. As a result, it has more assurance about its financial management, purchasing and value for money.

The service has made savings and efficiencies, which haven't affected its operational performance and the service it gives the public. It has made savings through the support function collaboration and publication of the RRM.

The service is taking steps to make sure it achieves efficiency gains through sound financial management and best working practices. It is doing this in important areas such as estates, fleet and purchasing. It uses national procurement frameworks to get the best possible purchasing power, for items such as fire kit and breathing apparatus. And the collaboration with North Yorkshire Police also provides opportunities for the service to benefit from economies of scale.

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

Adequate

North Yorkshire 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 should make sure its fleet and estates management programmes are linked to its risk and resource model, and that it understands the impact future changes to those programmes may have on its service to the public.

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

Main findings

The service's ability to mitigate its main financial risks has improved

The service has developed a sound understanding of future financial challenges. It plans to mitigate its financial risks. For example, the service has been actively carrying out a 'save to invest' approach. This means the service has identified and introduced efficiency savings with the specific intention of reinvesting this money to support the priorities in the RRM. It has paused some reinvestment to manage some unforeseen cost pressures, such as a higher than anticipated pay award and increased on-call costs. As a result, there is a balanced budget for 2024/25, which includes savings of around £2.2 million. Non-pay savings are around £545,000 of this total.

The underpinning assumptions are relatively robust and realistic. They take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions. At the time of our inspection, the service had considered uncertainties related to pension costs, changes to government funding such as the withdrawal of the rural services grant, and future pay awards. In addition, following the change from a police, fire and crime commissioner to a mayoral governance model, the service has modelled how different levels of council tax increase could support its future investment priorities.

We were pleased to see that the service has identified investment opportunities to improve the service to the public or generate further savings. It has placed orders for 16 new fire engines, which will cost £5.3 million. It also has plans to buy a further 15 fire engines. This will significantly reduce the overall age of the fleet and reduce maintenance costs. The service also told us it needed to spend around £5 million over the next five years to make improvements to its estate.

The service has used reserves to support transformation

The service has a sensible and sustainable plan for using its reserves. It has used earmarked reserves to introduce changes and make improvements. For example, its new development reserve was set up to fund a transformation team until the end of the 2024/25 financial year unless savings were made to make these staff permanent. The service has planned to include funding in the 2025/26 revenue budget, so this team is now a permanent resource.

Estates require significant investment

The service needs to do more to address the area for improvement issued during our last inspection, concerning its fleet and estates management programmes. Under the support function collaboration, the service has a joint strategic asset management programme. This programme covers the years from 2022 to 2032 and considers both the fleet and estates provision for fire and police. However, the service has lacked its own estates and fleet strategies and therefore has had limited information available to inform the joint management programme.

The report of the internal audit programme for 2023/24 raised concerns about estates management. As a result, the service commissioned a stock condition survey of all fire and rescue estate assets, to take place in September 2024. Such work hadn't previously taken place for over a decade, and some staff told us of poor working facilities, such as lack of heating for some periods at one fire station. On completion of the survey, the service has identified the need for significant investment across the organisation.

To address this, it has appointed a new head of estates, who is accountable for providing a risk-appropriate strategy. This should be aligned with the service's allocation of capital funding so there is a prioritised and affordable approach to making these improvements. Some work has already taken place to allocate risk ratings to the stock condition survey, allowing the service to be clear in its priorities as it proceeds.

The service has made efficiencies across fleet provision

The service has restructured the fleet department and provided some stability in this area. It has appointed a new head of fleet to work with the RRM and to inform the 2025 CRMP.

We were encouraged to see that, where possible, the service had collaborated to create efficiencies. This includes the purchase of a command unit from North Yorkshire Police, which has been refurbished to meet the requirements of the service. The service told us this has saved around £150,000 compared to buying new. In addition, the service shares a workshop for the repair and maintenance of vehicles.

The service plans to relocate existing fire and rescue service vehicles to be used by on-call staff when carrying out prevention and protection activity.

The service is transforming by modernising its technology

The service actively considers how changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk. It also looks to exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness presented by changes in technology.

The strategic leadership team is committed to modernising and is directing change and improvements in technology across the service. Changes include:

- introducing IT packages including Microsoft software;
- appointing a data analyst;
- creating tactical and strategic dashboards;
- commissioning an external company to analyse data and identify risk and support the development of the RRM and the CRMP;
- purchasing a dynamic mobilising and cover tool; and
- upgrading the community fire risk management system.

The service has introduced new ways of working including the installation of software that will modernise and improve how the service communicates and monitors performance. The analysis of performance data will also allow the service to better understand its workflows and target its activity.

However, the service is having problems with the use of some of its technology. During our inspection we found that the service had issued 4G tablets to all fire engines to improve data collection and provide data security throughout activities. Some staff told us that tablets weren't always effective due to login issues, and in rural areas it was often difficult to get a data signal. Resulting inconsistencies in how the service collects and records data will then delay the service in viewing performance data. The service is aware of these issues and is working to improve accessibility for all staff.

The service has upgraded the resource management app, which has improved its functionality. On-call firefighters are now able to use the app to record their availability remotely.

The service has put in place the capacity and capability it needs to achieve sustainable transformation, and it routinely looks for opportunities to work with others to improve efficiency and provide better services in the future. It has created opportunities to improve and change by making the most of the support function collaboration.

The IT department is improving its accessibility to the service

The service considered how the support functions could best support the service under the support function collaboration. To enhance its understanding some support staff from IT have visited stations to get feedback. These visits help support staff better understand how they can provide an IT function that is accessible and how they support the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the workforce.

Changes have been made to the IT department as a result of the feedback. Scheduled visits to on-call stations are now in place to allow IT staff to resolve issues during the evening when on-call staff are in attendance at their stations. Allowing IT teams to be more accessible improves communication and reduces delays in providing service.

The service generates some income

The service considers options for generating extra income, but its ambition and track record in securing extra income are limited. It receives income from North Yorkshire Police for the space the police use in some of the service's fire stations.

Promoting the right values and culture

Adequate

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate 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 monitor dual contracts to make sure staff don't work excessive hours.

The service should make sure it has effective absence and attendance procedures in place.

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 improving culture and behaviours, which are supported by its values

The service has well-defined values in the Core Code of Ethics, which staff understand. We found staff at all levels of the service showing behaviours that reflect service values. This is also reflected in our staff survey results. They show that 89 percent of respondents agreed that colleagues consistently modelled and maintained the service values.

Evidence we collected during our inspection shows strategic leaders act as role models. For example, most staff feel there is a sense of positive change around the new and permanent strategic leadership team. Some staff told us leaders were improving processes and had increased their involvement with staff. They have done this using scheduled visits and introducing where possible 'ride along', where the chief fire officer works at a tactical level with crews to improve communication. Most staff describe leaders as visible and approachable. In our staff survey, 69 percent of respondents felt that senior leaders consistently modelled and maintained the service values.

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

The service aims to improve its culture by using independent academic research

The service has invested in a subsidised collaboration with the University of Huddersfield, to develop a framework for cultural change and behavioural improvement. The aims of the project are to understand the issues across the organisation and to co-develop a research-informed toolkit for change and a proposed implementation plan. To make sure the research is based on staff experiences, researchers spoke to employees using one-to-one interviews and focus groups across both operational and support staff sectors, and recorded them describing their experiences.

Early findings indicate the service is improving culturally, and the commissioning of the project and the commitment of strategic leaders show that there is a desire to create change.

However, the findings also highlight the need for the service to continue to improve in certain areas. Improvements include creating a more supportive environment using middle managers, and continuing to build trust in processes for handling inappropriate behaviour. During our inspection we were encouraged to hear staff across the service speaking positively about some middle managers.

The research also found the service has what were described as 'organisational ghosts' – memories and stories of past events that are still having an impact on the attitudes and behaviours of staff members.

Staff have received the research and report well. Although the strategic leadership team doesn't contribute to the collection of evidence, it has committed to the process and its required outcomes. We look forward to seeing during our next inspection what impact the toolkit for change has on the service.

The service has good well-being provisions for mental and physical health

The service has well-understood and effective well-being policies in place, which are available to staff. A significant range of well-being support is available to support both physical and mental health. For example, under the support function collaboration, the service has access to a wealth of well-being provisions, including both physical and psychological therapies. All staff are offered trauma risk management if they attend an incident that may have affected their well-being. All counsellors are trained by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Also under the support function collaboration, employees have access to the police [Oscar Kilo](#) vehicle, known in the service as 'the OK van'. The van is able to visit stations around the county to provide simple health checks, such as blood pressure checks, and signposting to alternative support services.

There are good provisions in place to promote staff well-being. These include online well-being events. Staff attendance isn't mandatory and the events allow flexibility as to when and how staff access virtual support sessions. The results of our staff survey provide further evidence for this availability: 91 percent of respondents (116 out of 127) agreed that they could access services to support their mental well-being.

The service needs to improve some areas of health and safety

The service has appointed a new head of health and safety to further support and improve health and safety.

The service has effective and well-understood health and safety policies and procedures in place. These are readily available, and the service promotes them effectively to all staff. In our staff survey, 95 percent of respondents (121 out of 127) agreed that they understood the policies and procedures the service had in place to make sure they could work safely. The service has effective reporting processes using the health and safety board meetings and subgroups.

When required, the service uses bulletins to inform staff of risk-critical or safety information. However, there is inconsistency across the service in how these bulletins are received and acknowledged as they are issued in both digital and paper formats. This means the service can't assure itself they have been read and understood by all staff members.

The service needs to improve how it monitors staff with dual contracts

We found the service hadn't made enough improvement in this area since our last inspection. It needs to further improve how it monitors the working hours of staff who work dual contracts.

The service is made up mainly of on-call fire stations. It employs several staff who work the general shift pattern as their primary role along with an on-call contract as their secondary employment. Although the service does some monitoring of staff who have secondary employment or dual contracts to make sure they comply with the law and its limits on working time, this isn't real-time but is retrospective over a 17-week period. Some staff told us they were often available for calls without taking breaks and managed their own time without challenge from the service. We weren't able to identify a process in which the service would be alerted if a staff member had exceeded the working times without sufficient breaks at the time of a call.

To make sure staff can respond to emergencies effectively and safely, the service must make sure staff with dual contracts are rested and prepared for duty.

The service isn't consistently managing absence

The service has an absence policy, but not all staff, including managers, understand it. The service doesn't always follow its absence policy. For example, we found evidence absence pay was variable across the number of open cases. How the service chooses to pay absent staff members is decided based on the individual's circumstances along with their manager's discretion. This creates inconsistency across the service and its decision-making processes. We also found the length of time the service is supporting staff members in some cases is excessive. The service doesn't have a capabilities process or agreement so the service isn't supported in how it manages the absence of staff who can't carry out their duties.

The service should have clear and consistent policies, procedures and processes that allow it to make sure absence is monitored and dealt with in a way that is both effective and efficient. It should also provide systems that appropriately inform relevant departments of staff absence so they can manage the workforce effectively. Some staff told us they weren't told of staff absences, and this then affected resource planning.

In 2023/24, the average number of days not worked per firefighter due to long-term sickness increased by 38 percent compared to 2022/23. The lack of absence management may over time affect the resilience and availability of the workforce and lead to additional financial impacts.

Getting the right people with the right skills

Good

North Yorkshire 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 workforce planning

The service has good workforce planning in place. This makes sure skills and capabilities align with what it needs to effectively carry out its RRM. For example, the introduction of the workforce planning board makes sure succession planning is subject to consistent scrutiny by strategic leaders, who are proactively resourcing the organisation. In addition, the creation of a risk-critical role register helps the service to plan ahead.

The service told us it had promoted 34 staff to wholetime firefighters in 2024. Some of these previously worked on-call, which has left gaps in other areas. However, the service is aware of this and has set up an on-call futures programme as part of its workforce planning. The service successfully asked for approval to reinvest funding that was originally earmarked for the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme national network project into the on-call recruitment and retention process.

The role of the on-call futures programme team is to focus on how the service promotes firefighting careers at on-call stations and how it supports and retains firefighters in those roles. The team acts as a single point of contact by supporting applicants through the assessment processes and supporting their ongoing development.

The team has assessed the needs of all on-call stations, now and in future. Using this information, strategic leaders can review a station for approved staffing levels, risk and requirements. For example, highlighting a station as having a low number of firefighters available triggers the service to analyse the station's area for potential targeted recruitment campaigns.

This focus has increased the number of recruits. At the time of our inspection, the service was able to show it had 120 applications from across the county, with several potential recruits at priority stations.

The service acknowledges the dedicated and continuous work it takes to provide on-call firefighters. To enhance this work, the service uses Operational Research in Health data aligned with [Mosaic](#) data to identify where it can extend the on-call timed response boundary. (The boundary marks the maximum distance an on-call firefighter may live or work from the station.) This opens recruitment to a wider community.

The service is also acknowledging the commitment of businesses throughout the county in allowing staff to leave primary roles to attend emergency incidents. The service shows its appreciation to local primary employers for this flexibility and their continued support to the community. It does this by presenting them with recognition plaques and using social media to create public appreciation posts.

The service is improving workforce skills and capabilities

Most staff told us they could access the training they need to be effective in their roles, including management skills and non-operational skills. In our staff survey, 78 percent of respondents (99 out of 127) agreed that they had received sufficient training to effectively do their jobs.

The service's training plans make sure staff can maintain competence and capability effectively. For example, operational staff are trained in both prevention and protection where required, with on-call and fire control staff also having the opportunity to develop in these areas. And specific support skills are also transferred throughout departments. The service's leadership programmes for first-line managers and middle managers cover all aspects of management including difficult conversations; equality, diversity and inclusion; and managing performance. The service has also given middle managers the opportunity to attend ACAS training, which has received positive feedback.

However, some staff told us they didn't feel confident in areas such as IT, the risk management information systems and the new dashboards. To overcome this challenge, the service aims to produce IT packages that are intuitive, with supporting guidance on the intranet. The service has also provided online 'lunch and learn' workshops to provide further support.

Operational crews receive effective command training, which is monitored and revalidated once every two years. The reassessment programme includes risk-critical skills such as using breathing apparatus. Where a person needs more training in a particular skill, the service's policy allows them to travel to an incident with the fire engine, but they may not use this skill at the incident. The deployment of the next available fire engine would provide additional resource. The service should make sure crews' skills remain valid to meet the risk requirements of the service.

New applications to monitor staff competence help identify gaps to aid planning

The service monitors staff competence and has implemented a training planner to monitor workforce capabilities. Besides this, staff can use the resource management app to record their competency training, which will then update a new real-time competency dashboard. Managers and strategic leaders can monitor the dashboard to track staff training. However, some staff told us a glitch in the resource management app meant it didn't always recognise when competency training was complete. Managers told us this could be time-consuming and inefficient when planning and organising training. This fault was reported at the time of our inspection, and the service is aware of the issues it causes operational crews.

The service regularly updates its understanding of staff skills and risk-critical safety capabilities by monitoring and providing mandatory e-learning packages for areas such as safeguarding and health and safety. This approach means the service can identify gaps in workforce capabilities and resilience. It also means it can make sound and financially sustainable decisions about current and future needs.

The service provides learning and improvement opportunities

The service promotes a culture of continuous improvement throughout the organisation, and it encourages staff to learn and develop. For example, it has provided learning opportunities for staff, including level 2 and level 3 protection qualifications, e-learning packages and face-to-face equality, diversity and inclusion training. These learning packages adapt to the varying learning styles across the organisation and allow staff to learn at their own pace.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity

Adequate

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.

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

Area for improvement

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

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

Main findings

The service has made some improvements to gathering and acting on feedback but needs to do more

The service has developed several ways to work with staff on issues and decisions that affect them. These include methods to build all-staff awareness of fairness and diversity, as well as targeted initiatives to identify matters that affect different staff groups.

There are network groups that are available to all staff, for example:

- women
- men
- race and culture
- neurodiversity
- religion and spiritual
- LGBTQ.

Each group is sponsored at a strategic level and is supported by network champions across the service.

The service is in the process of updating its equality, diversity and inclusion strategy. It is carrying out a staff survey to inform the strategy for 2025.

The service has taken action to address matters staff have raised. For example, it has adapted processes as a result of feedback, such as making further allowances for neurodivergence in recruitment. These adaptations have allowed staff to be further supported with software for dyslexia and additional coaching for recruitment applications. Staff have received these actions positively. However, we did find examples where the service could have done more to support staff who raised issues in the network groups about uniform.

The service was able to provide evidence that it works with representative bodies and staff associations when required.

The service is creating a change in culture to tackle bullying, harassment and discrimination

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

In our staff survey, 17 percent of respondents (22 out of 127) told us they had been subject to bullying or harassment and 20 percent (26 out of 127) to discrimination over the past 12 months. This is less than during our last inspection, when 38 percent of staff survey respondents (29 out of 77) reported they had been subject to bullying or harassment and 40 percent (31 out of 77) to discrimination in the 12 months before the survey.

Most staff are confident in the service's approach to tackling bullying, harassment and discrimination, grievances and disciplinary matters. The strategic leadership team provided evidence that it acted on reports of bullying and harassment, and valued this as a service priority. It uses the Core Code of Ethics to guide staff on the expectations across the service. Its commitment to improving culture is also evident in its investment in the University of Huddersfield framework for cultural change in behaviours.

The service has made sure all staff are trained and clear about what to do if they encounter inappropriate behaviour. The new confidential reporting line allows staff to report it anonymously and effectively.

The service is improving its recruitment and promotion process

There is an open, fair and honest recruitment process for staff or those wishing to work for the fire and rescue service. The service has an effective system to understand and remove the risk of [disproportionality](#) in recruitment processes. For example, the new recruitment and promotion process has been developed externally. The external company has carried out data research in the service, such as focus groups, interviews and surveys, to support its implementation. An equality impact assessment further assures the service there are no adverse impacts.

The service has put considerable effort into developing its recruitment processes so they are fair and potential applicants can understand them. The recruitment policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles. The service advertises recruitment opportunities both internally and externally through organisations such as Women in the Fire Service UK, the Asian Fire Service Association and the NFCC. The service has also brought in support from a recruitment agency that targets recruitment opportunities towards under-represented groups. This has encouraged applicants from diverse backgrounds, including into middle and strategic management roles. The service has also taken other steps to improve diversity in recruitment. For example, [positive action](#) days are in place, along with 'have a go' days and 'what to expect from the role' virtual drop-in sessions. The workforce supports this.

However, the service needs to do more to understand the diversity of its existing workforce, including staff members with [protected characteristics](#). In its diversity data, there is a high proportion of 'not stated' declarations from staff. It would benefit from understanding how equality affects the workforce, using data to promote further improvements.

The proportion of firefighters that identified as being from an ethnic minority background has increased from 1.5 percent (8 people) as at 31 March 2023 to 3.4 percent (19 people) as at 31 March 2024. However, the proportion of firefighters who identified as a woman has decreased from 8.7 percent (56 people) to 8.1 percent (50 people) over the same period.

For the whole workforce, as at 31 March 2024, 3 percent identified as being from an ethnic minority background compared to 7.7 percent in their local population and 8.6 percent throughout all fire and rescue services. A total of 14 percent identified as a woman, compared to an average of 14 percent throughout all fire and rescue services.

The service is improving how it implements equality, diversity and inclusion objectives

The service has improved its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. It makes sure it can offer the right services to its communities and can support staff with protected characteristics. For example, the service has consulted with staff networks about altering the governance structure for meetings that involve equality, diversity and inclusion. As a result, the meetings will now join the tactical and strategic boards under one equality, diversity and inclusion culture board to better meet objectives.

The 2022/24 equality strategy has been supplemented with feedback from the service's staff survey. The service was due to introduce the updated strategy in early 2025. This will allow the service to propose changes as a result of the feedback.

Equality impact assessment is ineffective

The service has an ineffective equality impact assessment process. Although the service has taken action to establish and improve the process, the staff who use it don't fully understand it. The service has provided some training to middle managers. But it needs to make further improvements to make sure all staff understand how key decision-making can affect equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation.

The service has used varying templates under the support function collaboration that aren't suitable for a fire and rescue service. This has led to confusion and error. The service is aware of this and has made a strategic decision to align all future equality impact assessments with the NFCC's template and guidance.

It is also not clear who has overall accountability for any actions that are identified as a result of an effective equality impact assessment or for the level of strategic oversight that makes sure standards are consistent. Without a good understanding of the impacts that policies and procedures have on equality, the service can't amend these documents to create tangible change for the workforce. The service should provide consistent oversight of all completed equality impact assessments, and collate and monitor all identified actions to make sure they are completed.

Managing performance and developing leaders

Good

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

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

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

Main findings

The service is improving how it manages individuals' performance

The service has developed a new performance management system, which was introduced during 2024. This allows the service to effectively develop and assess the individual performance of all staff. For example, the service holds personal development review conversations with staff at least annually, covering topics such as training, development and well-being.

Through our staff survey, most staff reported they have regular discussions with their manager and these are meaningful. In the survey, 62 percent of respondents (54 out of 87) felt their personal development review was useful. Each staff member has individual goals and objectives, and regular performance assessments. Most staff feel confident in the performance and development arrangements in place.

The service has invested in its promotion and progression processes

The service has put considerable effort into developing its promotion and progression processes so that they are fair and all staff can understand them. Historically, fire and rescue services have held competency-based interviews for vacancies. However, with the help of an independent external specialist, the service has designed and introduced a strength-based assessment framework. The framework design considered the views of the workforce using focus groups and online surveys. It had support from the talent management team.

The framework focuses on eight key strength areas, which are aligned to rank or role requirements such as resilience, teamwork and empathy. The service has included the need for independence on the interview panel and uses its collaboration with the police to provide independent interviewers.

The service has also evaluated the processes and made changes to them as a result. For example, the service has made changes concerning the provision of reasonable adjustments. The service now allows additional time for those who need it, and opportunities to discuss the suitability of the role with the recruitment team before application.

The processes are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles. Since 2022, the processes have been used for all promotion and external recruitment, from chief fire officer to crew manager roles. Overall, most staff told us this was a positive change from the strategic leaders and felt that this had improved fairness and transparency.

However, despite the changes there are still some staff who feel further improvements can be made. The service should do more to assure staff the processes are robust and where possible publish changes to the processes as a result of feedback.

The service has improved planning of its future workforce

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

It manages selection processes consistently. And it uses temporary promotions appropriately to fill short-term resourcing gaps. The workforce planning board has reduced the percentage of management roles on a temporary contract from 42 percent to 11 percent. However, the service still has several temporary roles at a tactical level. It should aim to address this to provide stability throughout the organisation.

The service has improved the diversity of its strategic leadership team

The service knows it needs to go further to increase workforce diversity. However, it now has a diverse strategic leadership team as a result of external recruitment and promotion of internal staff.

The service has introduced programmes to develop leadership and high-potential staff at all levels

The service has introduced first-line and middle manager leadership programmes. These support first-line and middle managers in developing and managing staff, and identify those with high potential and a desire to succeed. They have already trained over 182 staff in the service. They have modules that teach skills in subjects such as equality, diversity and inclusion; leadership; building effective teams; and problem-solving and decision-making.

The programmes are unique as they are developed and presented under the service's collaboration with North Yorkshire Police. Leadership skills are taught to staff at the right level for their roles and are consistent across both organisations. This has already benefited staff attending emergency incidents, providing stronger and familiar working relationships.

The service advertises all talent and leadership opportunities fairly through its recruitment and promotion pathways for all staff to consider. These include Women in the Fire Service UK, the Asian Fire Service Association and the NFCC.

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

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