

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service

Inspection Improvement Actions

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in the summer of 2018 and a further revisit took place in October 2018, as part of an inspection programme for all UK fire and rescue services. The resulting Report of Findings highlighted areas where we are performing well and two key areas we need to improve, which encompasses seven recommendations.

We took immediate action to address these recommendations and are also undergoing a significant programme of work to transform our service.

Following on from the original inspection and revisit, the HMICFRS also sent a small team of inspectors to revisit the service again on 2-4 September 2019. The purpose of this visit was to review the action we have taken against the causes of concern identified in July and October 2018 and it also highlighted any areas that require further improvement and focus.

HMICFRS were due to carry out a second full inspection in June of this year. Unfortunately, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic this inspection has been postponed until Spring 2021. However, HMICFRS did carry out a virtual inspection focusing on our response to COVID-19 and the impacts it has had on our service. This took place over a two-week period in September, outcomes of which will be published around mid-January. Findings of all fire service COVID-19 inspections will be fed into the State of Fire and Rescue Report, due to be published in February 2021.

As mentioned in our previous update, the impact of the terrible and far reaching COVID-19 pandemic on our services is continuing to be assessed as part of our transformation programme on an ongoing basis.

Progress on the key areas of concern and seven recommendations, as well as a summary of the progress made against revisit findings is shown below:

Key area 1: SFRS doesn't have a robust and sustainable system to support its operational response model.

Recommendation 1. Put in place a response plan based on a thorough assessment of risk to the community

Our Community Risk Profile (CRP) is refreshed and updated annually, most recently in July of this year and it includes the most recent data about the risks within Surrey. This information helps us to understand where the risks associated with places in the county are, where the most vulnerable people are and when and where the risks are greater. This helps us to plan the provision of proactive prevention and protection activities, targeted for the most vulnerable in our communities, to reduce risks and keep Surrey safe.

The current pandemic has highlighted the need for a more localised district and borough based CRP. The districts and boroughs that border London were shown to have a higher risk of COVID-19 than geographical areas that do not border the capital. The Community Safety Team will work alongside our Digital and Data Team to create 11 sub levels of data to more accurately identify localised risks. This will take into account geographically and community make-up differences that the wider profile may overlook, and this will enable us to target our resources even more effectively.

The Integrated Risk Management Plan (our Making Surrey Safer Plan) was approved by our Fire and Rescue Authority (Surrey County Council) on the 24 September 2019.

The revisit letter from HMICFRS dated 5 November 2019 stated that they found this to be a comprehensive and evidence-based assessment of risk and considered options. They said it provided an opportunity for the people of Surrey to have a say on proposals and that the proposals were linked to the findings of their inspection.

We are introducing the new service operating model in phases. The first phase went live in April 2020 and delivery of the second phase has been implemented in January 2021. Both phases have been assured independently by Brunel University ensuring we can fully understand the impact of changing legislation, the findings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry(s) and the current national emergency of COVID-19, on the outcomes we expect and on the risk data that is the foundation of our planning. The new service operating model is subject to continuous review and assurance.

Recommendation 2. Ensure the service has the appropriate resources (people and equipment) to respond to risk in line with its Integrated Risk Management Plan.

As explained in our previous update, the governance structure for SFRS includes the Workforce Working Group (WWG) which is focussed on deliverables against the People Strategy and includes workforce planning. It is underpinned by a variety of policies and frameworks relating to our people.

The Resources Working Group ensures oversight of the Logistics Teams, a key area of the business in the provision of suitable and sufficient vehicles, equipment, etc. We also have a robust Capital Replacement Programme, which will fund the vehicles, equipment and more that we need. We have also secured additional capital investment to enable our new ways of working, including investment in property.

We recently launched an ongoing recruitment campaign for firefighters to join on both wholetime and on-call contracts. We attracted 587 applicants for this role of which 12 of the successful candidates will start their training in January 2021. We are running a Crew Commander boarding process in December and are currently working with 40 of our Firefighters to complete their development folders which will make them eligible for the next boarding process. We have made an appointment to a Group Commander role following the retirement of one of previous Group Commanders.

We recently ran a course for staff looking to migrate from on-call to wholetime contracts with seven successful candidates and we will be placing these individuals on stations shortly.

We have now recruited Community Safety Partnership Officers and Rural Affairs Officers who are forming engagement plans with districts and boroughs and other partners, this has given us additional capability. The Community Safety Team, Youth Engagement and Firewise Teams have all increased their resource and training is underway to upskill existing and new members of staff as part of forming these new teams.

Recommendation 3. Ensure the service understands and actively manages the resources and capabilities available for deployment.

At the time of the initial inspection in 2018, HMICFRS found that there had been a lack of effective controls in place to monitor and manage overtime. An overtime action plan was put in place and delivered against by the service. The issue was resolved to the satisfaction of HMICFRS, as confirmed in their revisit letter.

Over the last year a reasonable level of overtime was used for resilience during periods of sickness and training, however we are still at a reduced level which will reduce further once at full establishment and we will continue to monitor and manage on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation 4. Tell the people of Surrey what benefits its service provision and ways of working in the operational response model will give them.

We continue to build on our communications plan to ensure that we communicate with the public in a variety of ways. We ensure our communications are clear, transparent and help inform the public on the Making Surrey Safer Plan and the benefits it will bring to Surrey.

Our Customer Interface project which is looking at how we engage with residents and stakeholders has already delivered a number of improvements, such as carrying out a thorough update of the website. This involved a content audit and the removal of duplication and out of date information which resulted in a much more user friendly website. Importantly the design and build was based around fire and rescue service users through user testing and includes the ability to change and update the site remotely from Surrey County Council.

After the relaunch of the website on 1 April 2020 the number of visits during the first three months was significantly higher than what was predicted and if maintained will result in a 20% increase on reported 2019/20 visits. This highlights how successful the relaunch of the website has been, providing the service with an excellent platform to engage with residents and communities, supporting the increase in virtual contact aligned to changing the way we work.

Now in Phase 2 of the project, the recruitment website has also been improved and updated, ensuring our recruitment information is easily accessible for people wanting to work for our service. We are also about to complete the building of a decision tree to triage safe and well visits and building virtual buildings highlighting safe and well information. It is planned to link this to causes of fire in high rise buildings and how to maintain common areas within them.

In 2021 there will be a pilot of an events vehicle displaying relevant communications and messaging from which we will assess impact and if successful will potentially take forward to design further events vehicles.

Key area 2: SFRS doesn't use its resources efficiently to manage risk or its financial and physical resources effectively to keep people safe.

Recommendation 5: Ensure that the resourcing model meets our risk demand sustainably.

We have ensured that our resourcing model, which is included within our Making Surrey Safer Plan, takes account of the risk we have and the way we expect some risks to change.

As outlined in Recommendation 1 – the updated Community Risk Profile uses forecasted data, such as changes to population for groups vulnerable to fire between now and 2030

Our Community Intelligence Team has expanded to increase data analysts who will work with the Data and Digital Team to continue to identify, build and maintain different risk profiles ensuring that the service is confident that the Community Risk Profile reflects the 11 Boroughs and Districts across Surrey.

Recommendation 6. Ensure the service workforce model supports the operational model to manage risk efficiently and sustainably

A key principle of the Making Surrey Safer Plan is to realign resources delivering greater prevention and protection activities, focussed on stopping emergencies from occurring in the first place. Our Workforce Resourcing policy is now embedded, supporting managers across the service to ensure we have the right people, in the right place with the right skills at the right time.

We continue to embed the Leadership Behavioural Framework in all of our selection methods. We have been working hard to improve the application process for candidates through an online application system which will also allow us to monitor and measure the outputs of our recruitment and promotional processes. We now

have better metrics to inform decision making at our WWG on all areas relevant to delivering the people strategy.

All of our people policies have now been reviewed and are readily available for staff in an easy to find way on our service intranet. We have rolled out Phase 1 of the Professional Conversations process and are reviewing and improving this for the next one in April 2021.

A working group has been set up with representatives of all staff groups across the service to explore an approach to career pathways for the service. This is in its final collation stage and will inform the development of our approach to talent management.

Recommendation 7. Ensure that the service uses the available budget prudently to support its risk management activities

Regular financial monitoring meetings take place between budget holders and our Finance Business Partners ensuring the prudent use of our available budgets across all departments. A Finance Academy training programme is now also in place.

The Making Surrey Safer Plan is appropriately funded, and our new operating model will be more efficient.

We will continue to review our budget considering the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the outcomes of our transformation programme.

The HMIFRS revisit letter indicated that they would like to see further progress in the following areas:

Fire engine availability.

1 April 2020 saw the implementation of Phase 1 of the Making Surrey Safer Plan. Changes at Camberley, Fordbridge, Guildford and Woking Fire Stations who now have one immediately available fire engine available at night, rather than two. Also changes to Haslemere and Walton Fire Stations who changed from five working days to seven working days.

Since the implementation of Phase 1, our fire engine availability is on average:

- Day - 22 fire engines.
- Night - 21 fire engines.

This represents an improvement when compared to the period during which the HMICFRS revisited and is above our minimum level of fire engine availability required, as detailed within the Making Surrey Safer Plan.

Increase of recruitment to on-call firefighter roles.

The on-call project was commissioned to address specific issues that our service was facing. While we are making good progress on these areas, we have learnt from our research and the national recommendations that change within on-call requires longer-term strategic activity as well as the practical changes we are putting in to place. We have also learnt that changing culture, ways of working and the systems around on-call will take time with most changes averaging between three to five years to reach a place of 'success'.

Therefore, we have updated our key deliverables to reflect these strategic changes. We believe that in order to make long-term and long-lasting changes we need to take the following strategic direction for our service:

- Remove the internal divisions and ensure on-call is seen as a clear route of entry into any area of the service
- We will guarantee equitable recruitment processes and training opportunities.
- Establish on-call as a countywide resource
- Capitalise on existing skills and community relationships

Other progress so far includes a recruitment campaign featuring on-call staff that launched in September 2020, communications sent to schools local to on-call units to build relationships and to promote the role of on-call, an internal on-call to wholetime migration process and also new materials are being created to support relationships with businesses within the local area whilst promoting the business benefits of having a firefighter as a member of staff

Attract and recruit more representative workforce

We will continue to ensure we put actions and measures in place to attract and recruit a more diverse workforce as reflected in our most recently reviewed People Strategy.

Ahead of our most recent ongoing recruitment campaign, we redesigned our messaging and promotional materials to accurately reflect the role of the firefighter with the aim of attracting a wider audience to apply for the role. We used social media to ensure that the message was targeted to those groups which were underrepresented across our workforce and revamped our recruitment website. Within the first month of recruitment, we gained 406 applicants, one quarter of which were from underrepresented groups.

We set up #SurreyFireFit which is a programme for potential applicants to get support and advice on the selection processes they would have to go through to become a firefighter. To complement this we have recently launched a mentoring scheme for new starters and those interested in joining the Fire Service to provide guidance and tailored support.

We continue to collaborate with a broad range of partners to engage with our local communities, helping us to understand the diverse needs of the people we serve so we can tailor our services and safety initiatives to those who need them most.

Along with our blue light partners we are working with Public Service Colleges to promote the role of firefighter to students and intend to continue this work moving forward with our Business Community Intelligence and schools teams.

Additionally, we have become a corporate member of the Women in the Fire Service to get support and a wider network of expertise to inform any positive action initiatives we may wish to pursue. We remain corporate members of Asian Fire Service Association. Both groups shared our recruitment communications and praised the service for “smashing stereotypes”.

We have developed our Workforce Fairness and Respect Network into a formal group which will scrutinise the service and hold it to account, giving a voice to those who are under-represented and providing opportunities to share ideas, mentor colleagues, acquire new skills and participate in the development of diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Finally, we recently undertook a Rapid Improvement Event to review our targeting, attraction and recruitment practices, which we are confident will make a difference to those members of our community considering a role in the fire and rescue service and that they will be best supported to achieve such.

In ensuring that we are allowing opportunities which are open and accessible to all we have recruited 42 staff within Business and Community Safety, on both green and grey book terms and conditions, with a higher uptake of female applicants successfully taking up positions within the team.

Proactive communications to the public.

As explained in earlier updates, a Communications Strategy has been developed for the service and is now in implementation. This strategy covers both communications with the public as well as communications internally with our staff. We are continually updating this strategy by listening to feedback from both our staff and the public to ensure we are reflecting the needs of all.

Our communications will continue to;

- Improve public perception of the Making Surrey Safer Plan and SFRS.
- Increase promotion of community safety work and campaigns for vulnerable people
- Support the work with businesses to improve their understanding and compliance of fire safety legislation
- Help increase recruitment of people from underrepresented groups
- Support SFRS staff through the recovery and possible second wave of COVID-19.

In addition, we have a new Digital and Media Officer who is working with our Community Resilience teams to increase community and business safety messaging to keep Surrey safe.

We are also in the process of developing a Community Protection Group Engagement Strategy which will build on the current strategy for the service. Our planned engagement activities will include staff focus groups on working patterns and transfer processes as well as workshops looking at the culture of the service and wider group. We want to ensure that people who live and work in Surrey get the opportunity to give their view to support the continuous improvement of services. Therefore, we are currently putting in place mechanisms that will ensure we are engaging with residents and are able to feedback how their views have been taken into account.

We will develop an engagement model that will be;

- Outcomes driven
- Aligned to our vision and ambitions
- Measurable
- Sustainable
- Drives Continual Improvement

We want to ensure that residents and staff have the opportunity to inform the continuous improvement of our services.

We hope that you have found this update useful and informative. We will continue to update our progress on a regular basis.