



Surrey Fire and Rescue Service Inspection Improvement Actions

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) was first inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in the summer of 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, the HMICFRS also sent a small team of inspectors to revisit the service again in September 2019. The purpose of this visit was to review the action we have taken against the causes of concern identified in the first inspection and it also highlighted any areas that require further improvement and focus.

HMICFRS were due to carry out a second full inspection in June 2020. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic this inspection was postponed and will now commence on 29 March 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. Outcomes of this inspection were published in January 2021 and an action plan for improvements has been created.

As mentioned in our previous updates, 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. As we move through recovery we will ensure that all impacts from COVID 19 are continually reviewed through business as usual activity.

Progress on the key areas of concern and seven recommendations from the 2018 report, 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 2020 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 more accurately identify localised risks. They will consider geographically and community make-up differences that the wider profile may overlook, and 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 and 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.

We are introducing the new service operating model in phases. The first phase went live in April 2020 and delivery of the second phase was 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.

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 includes workforce planning. It is also underpinned by a variety of policies and frameworks relating to our people.

Since 2019 we have run 2 external Whole Firefighter recruitment processes as well as selection processes for our On Call staff wishing to take up wholetime posts and Crew and Watch Commander ranks.

We have recruited into Joint Fire Control and numerous support roles across teams such as Health and Wellbeing, Health and Safety, Data and Digital and Learning and Development.

Community Safety Partnership Officers and Rural Affairs Officers are now in place and are forming engagement plans with districts and boroughs and other partners. The Community Safety Team, Youth Engagement, Firewise Teams and the Business Fire Safety team 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.

Now that phase two of the Making Surrey Safer Plan has been completed, the need for overtime has dramatically reduced. The number of staff at all levels has levelled out and over time is used only to support skill shortages due to the short impact of the changeover in phase two which should balance by the end of the financial year.

Any overtime is monitored monthly and reviewed as part of ongoing performance.

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 and that our communications are accessible to all.

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 service uses infographics to show how the service is performing (both operationally and non-operationally). This includes information such as response times, availability, wellbeing champions and more.

We are also highlighting the work of the service via social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram.

Since the last update, we also shared outcomes of the Brunel University London re-assurance of Phase 2 of our Making Surrey Safer Plan.

Our Customer Interface project continues to look at how we engage with residents and stakeholders. This project has already delivered a number of improvements, such as carrying out a thorough update of the website as per our previous update.

The relaunch of the website on 1 April 2020 provides 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. Our interactive decision tree for home fire safety visits is nearly complete. This will allow the public to understand their risk of fire in the home and how to prevent it. Business Safe and Well telephone audits have taken place to support business in their understanding of fire risk and legislation.

The recruitment website has also been improved and updated, ensuring our recruitment information is easily accessible for people wanting to work for our service.

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 into account the risk we have and the way we expect some risks to change.

As outlined in Recommendation 1 – the updated CRP 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 CRP reflects the 11 Boroughs and Districts across Surrey. This information will be used by teams both with Boroughs and Districts and centrally to highlight the most vulnerable people and support them through protection, prevention and response.

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.

The above approach is mirrored for our promotions and also provides clarity to staff on how they apply for promotion and the processes and eligibility criteria associated with this for each level.

We continue to refine our career pathways offer in conjunction with our Learning and Development colleagues to provide staff with clear career pathways across varying teams across the Service.

A review of Learning and Development provision is due to conclude by the end of March 2021 within which are recommendations designed to ensure that all our staff are equipped with the skills and knowledge relevant to their roles.

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.

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

We are supported by a continued Capital Investment programme to deliver Property improvements and a vehicle and equipment replacement programme.

Capital investment was also secured to support the expansion of our community resilience teams and to provide equipment for the most vulnerable residents.

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

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.

Phase 2 of the MSSP went live in January of this year which saw Painsill, Banstead and Egham Fire Stations became operational day time only.

We have seen a significant improvement against our county-wide response standard since then. With an average attendance time for the first appliance of 7 minutes.

Since the implementation of Phase 2 our average availability is;

- Day - 21 Fire engines
- Night- 21 Fire engines

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 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

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

Following on from the last update we have now completed two on call migration recruitment processes to bring on call staff into wholetime positions both as fire fighter and supervisory officers.

The service has also committed to supporting on call staff by listening to them and trialling new ways of working to support Service need and work life balance which will help increase recruitment and retention of a more diverse workforce.

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.

We are continually reviewing our promotional materials to accurately reflect the role of the firefighter with the aim of attracting a wider audience to apply for the role and we use social media to ensure that the message is targeted to those groups which are underrepresented across our workforce.

We are also currently reviewing our recruitment methods to make sure they consider those with neurodiverse conditions.

We continue to work with potential applicants on their fitness levels through our virtual #SurreyFireFit programme providing support and advice on the selection processes. We are shortly to launch our #SurreyFirePhysical programme to build on #SurreyFireFit and enable individuals to have a go at the physical assessments which form part of the selection exercises to become a firefighter.

In addition to the above, we offer potential applicants the opportunity to request a mentor to support them through the application and selection processes. This offer also extends out to those who are successful in joining through their training programme and those who would like support with development on an ongoing basis.

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.

We are a corporate member of the Women in the Fire Service and we remain corporate members of Asian Fire Service Association, both of which share our recruitment communications.

Our Fairness and Respect Network for staff is now well established. The network gives a voice to those who are under-represented and provide opportunities to share ideas, mentor colleagues, acquire new skills and participate in the development of diversity and inclusion initiatives.

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 of COVID-19.

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. We are currently putting in place mechanisms that will ensure we are also engaging with residents and are able to feedback how their views have been taken into account.

We are developing 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.