



# HMICFRS Areas of Improvement

## Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service Plan



HMICFRS inspected our service in 2022 as part of its third round of inspections of fire and rescue services in England. The inspection looked at the service’s effectiveness, efficiency, and people, and awarded the following grades:



### Good Effectiveness

How effective are we at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?



### Requires Improvement Efficiency

How efficient are we at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?



### Good People

How well do we look after our people?

The HMICFRS highlighted 13 Areas for Improvements

AFI No	HMICFRS Area For Improvement	Status	SFRS Update Summary	Date Completed
<b>Effectiveness</b>				
01	The service should make sure it allocates enough resources to meet its prevention strategy.	In progress	<p>A significant focus has been placed on strengthening our preventative measures, particularly within the Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A comprehensive review and mapping of the HFSV process has been undertaken. This initial draft was presented to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) for feedback on the 6th of September.</li> <li>Following revisions based on SLT input, the improved process will be presented again on the 28th of September for final approval.</li> </ul>	

- A draft of the updated HFSV Policy is also nearing completion and will be presented to the SLT in October for formal adoption.

**Investing in Prevention**

We are committed to enhancing our prevention capabilities through strategic investments in personnel and resources. This includes:

- **Leadership:** The appointment of a new Group Manager to lead the prevention department.
- **Partnerships and Delivery:** Recruitment of a dedicated Partnerships and Delivery Manager.
- **Safeguarding:** Strengthening our safeguarding capacity with a new Safeguarding Manager and extending the term of an existing manager who will support the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) workstream during their one-year flexible retirement period.
- **Delivery Resources:** Securing transformation funding from the CFO to support the effective delivery of the HFSV program.
- **Specialist Expertise:** Utilizing transformation funding to extend the fixed-term contracts of two full-time specialist prevention practitioners until October 2024.

These investments will ensure we have the necessary expertise and resources to implement the improved HFSV process and deliver a robust fire prevention program for our community

02

The service should better evaluate its prevention work so it understands all the benefits more clearly.

In progress

**Making Fire Safety Even Better in Suffolk**

SFRS is committed to keeping you safe from fire. Here's how we're working to improve:

Evaluation: SFRS recognises the importance of continuous improvement in our fire prevention efforts. To achieve this, we are implementing a robust evaluation framework:

- **NFCC Best Practices:** SFRS is adopting the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) evaluation framework. This ensures our approach aligns with national best practices in fire prevention strategy evaluation.

- **Comprehensive Assessment:** We will be conducting a thorough evaluation of all key areas within our prevention work. This will utilise a variety of methods:
  - **Surveys:** We will gather valuable feedback directly from the public through surveys.
  - **Peer Review:** Experts will be engaged to conduct peer reviews, providing an external perspective on our prevention strategy.
  - **Internal Audits:** The Suffolk County Council internal assurance team will conduct audits to ensure the effectiveness of our evaluation processes.

The findings from these evaluations will be documented within departmental policies, ensuring a consistent and data-driven approach to prevention strategy development.

By adopting this comprehensive evaluation framework, SFRS is committed to continuously strengthening our prevention efforts, ultimately leading to a safer Suffolk for all residents.

**Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs):**

We've asked an independent team within Suffolk County Council to review our HFSVs. Their feedback will help us make them even more helpful and informative for you.

**Prevention Strategy:**

We're adopting a new national framework to ensure the highest quality fire prevention across Suffolk.

This includes regular meetings to review fire incident data and tailor our prevention efforts accordingly.

We'll be using a variety of methods to evaluate our prevention work, including surveys, peer reviews, and internal audits

03

The service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of false alarms.

In progress

**Strategic Approach to Unwanted Fire Alarm Response**

While fire protection measures play a crucial role in reducing unwanted fire signals (UwFS), a strategic response to automatic fire alarms is essential.

### Data-Driven Approach

We are actively developing a data-driven approach to address UwFS. This includes:

- **Comprehensive Dashboard:** Collaboration with a Data Analyst is underway to create a dashboard encompassing all methods for identifying UwFS. This will provide a clear and comprehensive picture of the issue, allowing for more informed decision-making.
- **Standardised Definition:** The Area Manager (AM) for Protection sought clarification on the definition of UwFS from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). While a definitive response was not immediately available, the AM has chosen to proceed with utilising data for "False alarms due to apparatus." This data will be further refined with the ability to filter for other types of false alarms.

### AFA Recoding Page Update

We acknowledge the lack of progress on updating the AFA recoding page within the Premise Management System (PMS). Efforts to address this issue are ongoing.

This combined approach, utilising a comprehensive dashboard and standardised data analysis, will allow the service to develop a robust strategy to minimise UwFS occurrences, ultimately enhancing overall fire safety effectiveness.

04

The service should make sure it participates in a programme of cross-border exercises and share the learning from these exercises.

In Progress

We are committed to strengthening our cross-border fire safety strategy to ensure a coordinated and effective response across regional boundaries.

### Draft Strategy and Regional Engagement

- A draft cross-border strategy has been developed and uploaded to the Teams site for feedback from all relevant parties.

- We are actively seeking broader regional engagement to ensure the strategy reflects the diverse needs and considerations of our neighbouring fire services.

### **Closing the Loop: Action, Feedback, and Improvement**

A key focus area is establishing a robust feedback loop to translate operational experiences into actionable improvements. This includes:

- **Action Tracking:** We are developing a system to track action items arising from operational debriefs and information exchanges. This will ensure clear accountability and timely implementation of identified improvements.
- **Decision-Making:** The process for making strategic decisions based on cross-border operational experiences will be clearly defined within the finalised strategy.
- **Outcomes and Lessons Learned:** Capturing and disseminating key lessons learnt from cross-border exercises and operations is crucial. This will involve:
  - **Debriefs:** Conducting thorough debriefings to extract valuable lessons learned.
  - **Operational Change Management:** Integrating these lessons into the operational change process through the Risk and Resilience framework.
  - **Reporting and Tracking:** Utilising the Property Management System (PMS) to effectively record and track exercise data.
  - **Operational Assurance:** Sharing debriefing outcomes with relevant stakeholders, including exercise owners and the Operational Assurance team.

### **Exercise Planning and Implementation**

- An exercise policy and plan is nearing final approval. This will provide a robust framework for conducting effective cross-border exercises.
- We have implemented improved exercise recording procedures within the PMS.

These combined initiatives will establish a comprehensive and collaborative approach to cross-border fire safety, ensuring a more resilient and responsive regional fire service network.

## Efficiency

05

The service needs to show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention protection and response activities. This should be linked to risks and priorities set out in its new CRMP. The service hasn't made enough progress in this area.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is committed to allocating resources strategically to maximise public safety.

Outlined below is how our resource allocation aligns with the risks and priorities established in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) (2023-2027).

### **Risk-Based Approach:**

- The CRMP, developed in collaboration with the public, county council, and stakeholders, identifies key risks facing Suffolk's communities based on the Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAOR).
- SFRS utilises this risk assessment to guide resource allocation decisions across three core areas: Prevention, Protection, and Response.

### **Resource Distribution:**

- SFRS has recently undergone a structural review to ensure alignment with CRMP priorities

### **Resource Allocation and Performance:**

- **Prevention:** Increased resources have been allocated to the Prevention team, led by a dedicated Group Manager (GM) focused on strategy development and community interventions. This investment directly addresses CRMP priorities and aligns with the need to mitigate identified risks.
- **Protection:** This also provided dedicated resources and leadership to the Protection team, resulting in demonstrably improved performance (as evidenced by prosecution statistics and audit details). This reflects the CRMP's emphasis on proactive fire safety measures.
- **Response:** SFRS maintains a strong focus on maintaining a highly skilled and equipped response capability to ensure effective emergency response.

**Performance Management:**

- To ensure a "golden thread" of accountability, SFRS has implemented performance measures, regular manager one-on-one meetings, and local risk management plans. These initiatives connect individual efforts to the overall CRMP strategy and track progress towards established goals.

By strategically allocating resources based on the CRMP and its risk assessment, SFRS ensures efficient use of resources and prioritises activities that have the greatest impact on public safety in Suffolk

06

The service should make sure its arrangement for managing performance ensures its workforce uses its time in line with the priorities in the CRMP.

We are committed to delivering exceptional fire and rescue services while continuously striving for improvement. This update highlights key initiatives that support this commitment.

**Performance Assurance Board (PAB)**

- The PAB meets quarterly to monitor our progress against 15 key performance measures and other performance assurance. This enables ongoing evaluation and ensures we remain on track to achieve our service delivery goals.

**Management Reviews and Feedback**

- Regular one-on-one meetings between managers and their direct reports provide a platform for detailed performance discussions. This two-way communication allows for:
  - Feedback exchange on individual and team performance.
  - Identification of areas for improvement.
  - Recognition of achievements and successes.

**Strategic Direction Setting**

- The SFRS 2024-25 Service Plan outlines the strategic direction for each of our service areas. This plan serves as a roadmap for delivering efficient and effective fire and rescue services.

### Local Implementation Plans

- Local Risk Management Plans and Area Team plans translate the broader strategic goals of the CRMP into actionable targets for local teams. This ensures our service delivery is tailored to address the specific needs of each area and our community.

### Firefighter Utilisation

- Recent firefighter utilisation surveys have yielded valuable insights into the diverse range of activities undertaken by our personnel. This data, along with ongoing efforts to refine data collection methods, will allow for more accurate reporting of firefighter utilisation and overall service productivity.

Through robust performance monitoring, ongoing communication, and strategic planning, we are committed to delivering a high-performing fire and rescue service while fostering a culture of continuous improvement

## People

07

The service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure working hours are not exceeded.

Completed

We are committed to ensuring the well-being of all our staff, including those engaged in secondary contracts. This update highlights our ongoing efforts in this area.

### Monitoring Secondary Contracts

- The process for monitoring working hours in secondary contracts is currently under review in collaboration with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Eastern Region fire services. This collaborative approach aims to develop a regionally aligned system for effective monitoring.

### Communication and Information Gathering



- An article requesting information on secondary contracts was published in the SFRS newsletter in January 2023. This initiative aimed to gather data from staff and inform the development of monitoring procedures.
- Additionally, work is underway to collate information on working hours through our district teams.

**Future Initiatives**

- We are committed to implementing the Working Time Directive (WTD) to ensure staff working hours, including those in secondary contracts, comply with legal requirements.

**Communication Channels**

- We will continue to communicate updates and information on this topic through our newsletter and the fire service app. This will ensure staff are kept informed and have access to relevant resources.

By prioritising staff well-being and working collaboratively across regions, we are committed to developing a robust system for monitoring working hours in secondary contracts and ensuring compliance with relevant regulations.

08

The service should make sure its workforce plan takes full account of the skills and capabilities necessary for carrying out CRMP.

This update highlights key initiatives aimed at ensuring we have the skilled and qualified personnel required to deliver exceptional fire and rescue services now and in the future.

**Workforce Planning & Skills Forecasting**

- Workforce planning cycles are now directly linked to succession planning activities. This integrated approach allows us to proactively forecast future skill requirements based on upcoming retirements and anticipated service needs.
- As Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) initiatives are implemented, the associated skillsets needed for successful execution will be factored into our workforce development strategy. This ensures

our personnel are equipped with the necessary skills to address evolving community risks.

### **People Strategy Development**

The development of a comprehensive People Strategy is underway. This strategy will serve as a roadmap for talent management and workforce development, incorporating the findings from our skills forecasting efforts.

### **Assessment Centre Implementation**

The need for implementing assessment centres was identified earlier in 2024. To ensure the effectiveness of this initiative, we are exploring the possibility of utilising external support for resourcing these centres.

### **Area of Focus Document**

The finalisation of the Area of Focus document is contingent upon the publication of the 2024-25 Service Plan. Once the Service Plan is released, the Area of Focus document will be completed, providing a clear direction for workforce development priorities.

By proactively planning for future skill needs, integrating workforce planning with CRMP initiatives, and developing a robust People Strategy, we are committed to building a future-proof workforce that can effectively meet the evolving needs of our community.

09

The service should review its succession planning to make sure that it has effective arrangements in place to manage staff turnover while continuing to provide its core service to the public.

In progress

We are dedicated to building a future-proof fire service with a highly skilled and motivated workforce. This update highlights key initiatives aimed at achieving this goal.

### **Enhanced Workforce Planning**

- The frequency of the workforce planning cycle has been increased to monthly. This more frequent review allows for a more proactive and responsive approach to workforce needs, particularly in regards to:

- **Succession Planning:** Regularly assessing upcoming retirements and vacancies will enable us to develop targeted talent pipelines to fill critical roles.

### **Developing Our Talent Pool**

- **Succession Planning Data Development:** We are developing data reports to support strategic succession planning initiatives. This will provide valuable insights into the skills and experience profiles needed for key positions.
- **Leadership Development for Women:** A dedicated development program for females and aspiring leaders is under development. This program will empower and equip women to excel in leadership roles within the fire service.

### **SPD Review**

As previously mentioned, a review of the SPD is currently underway. This review will ensure the pathways effectively aligns with our workforce development goals and provides a clear roadmap for building a future-ready fire service.

### **Incentive Review**

A review of the current incentive structure for career progression and firefighter competency is planned. This review will assess the effectiveness of existing incentives in motivating staff development and achieving desired outcomes.

These initiatives demonstrate our commitment to:

- Proactive succession planning.
- Empowering women in leadership roles.
- Providing continuous learning and development opportunities.
- Fostering a culture of excellence within the fire service.

By investing in our workforce, we are building a stronger and more responsive fire service for the future.

10

The service should improve staff understanding of positive action.

### **Training and Evaluation**

The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) lead is currently conducting a gap analysis to assess the effectiveness of recent EDI training initiatives. This review will evaluate how well the training has been implemented across different service areas and identify any areas where further support or resources may be needed.

#### **Evaluation Measures:**

- A staff poll was conducted during the week commencing 29th January to gauge understanding of the training content and its application within their roles.
- The results of this poll were shared with staff during the week commencing 5th February.
- A short video showcasing positive actions taken as a result of the training was also shared with staff through SFRS News during the week commencing 5th February.

#### **Enhancing Recruitment and Training Resources:**

- The positive action video will be added to the information pack provided to recruiting managers.
- Additionally, the video will be linked to existing information on the "Approve to Ride Course" and the council's Single Equality Duty (SED) information.

These measures aim to ensure continuous improvement in EDI practices across the council

11

The service should make sure it has robust processes in place to carry out EIA and review and actions agreed as a result.

Completed

We are dedicated to ensuring fairness and inclusivity across all our services. The following initiatives underline our commitment to equality.

### **Enhanced EIA Integration**

- The National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) linked EIA screening tool has been embedded within our service procedures. This online tool streamlines the process of identifying potential equality impacts associated with policies and projects.
- EIA screening is now a mandatory component of both policy development and project implementation processes.

**NFCC Code of Ethics Integration**

- The NFCC Code of Ethics has been formally incorporated into the Service Plan and other key documents, such as the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). This emphasises the importance of fair and equitable treatment for all members of the community.

**Maintaining an EIA Database**

- SCC have a dedicated database on completed EIA pre-screenings and full EIAs. This readily accessible repository will ensure transparency and facilitate informed decision-making for future projects, considering their potential equality impact.

These combined initiatives demonstrate our commitment to:

- Proactive identification of potential barriers to equality through EIA screening.
  - Upholding a strong Code of Ethics that promotes fairness and inclusivity.
- Building a culture of awareness and responsibility regarding equality within the organisation

12

The service should make sure its selection, development and promotion of staff is open transparent and fair.

In progress

**SPD Review**

- A review of the SPD is currently underway. This review will assess the plan's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement to ensure it best supports our workforce development goals.

**Recruitment Progress**

- We are pleased to report positive developments in the area of recruitment.
- While specific details are not provided here, this demonstrates a focus on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our recruitment processes.

**Leadership Framework**

- The continued utilisation of the established leadership framework signifies a commitment to fostering strong leadership skills within the organisation. This framework provides a structured approach to developing leaders at all levels.

**Promotions and Transfers**

- Discussions were held regarding the use of temporary promotions and lateral transfers. It appears further analysis and potential adjustments to these practices may be considered.

We are committed to fostering a positive and supportive work environment for all staff. These initiatives aim to enhance our talent management strategies and ensure we have a skilled and well-developed workforce to deliver exceptional fire safety services to our community.

13

The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop, and support high potential staff and aspiring leaders.

In progress

As AFI 09