

# Fire & Rescue Service 2021/22

## Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service



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# About this inspection

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This inspection is from our third round of inspections of fire and rescue services in England. We first inspected Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service in July 2018. We published a report with our findings in December 2018 on the service's effectiveness and efficiency and how it looks after its people. Our second inspection, in autumn 2020, considered how the service was responding to the pandemic. This inspection considers for a second time the service's effectiveness, efficiency and people.

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In this round of inspections of all 44 fire and rescue services in England, we answer three main questions:

1. How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
2. How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
3. How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people?

This report sets out our inspection findings for Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service.

## What inspection judgments mean

Our categories of graded judgment are:

- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; and
- inadequate.











Good is our expected graded judgment for all fire and rescue services. It is based on policy, practice or performance that meet pre-defined grading criteria, which are informed by any relevant [national operational guidance](#) or standards.







If the service exceeds what we expect for good, we will judge it as outstanding.

If we find shortcomings in the service, we will judge it as requires improvement.

If there are serious, critical or systemic failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of inadequate.

# Overview

Question	This inspection	2018/19
 <b>Effectiveness</b>	 <b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>
Understanding fires and other risks	 Good	Good
Preventing fires and other risks	 Good	Good
Protecting the public through fire regulation	 Good	Requires improvement
Responding to fires and other emergencies	 Good	Good
Question	This inspection	2018/19
 <b>Efficiency</b>	 <b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>
Making best use of resources	 Requires improvement	Good
Future affordability	 Good	Requires improvement

Question	This inspection	2018/19
 <b>People</b>	 <b>Good</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Promoting the right values and culture	 Good	Requires improvement
Getting the right people with the right skills	 Good	Requires improvement
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Managing performance and developing leaders	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement

### HM Inspector's summary

It was a pleasure to revisit Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service, and I am grateful for the positive and constructive way that the service engaged with our inspection.

I am pleased with the performance of Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service in keeping people safe and secure from fires and other risks, although it needs to improve in some areas to provide a consistently good service. For example, it needs to show a clear link between its risk-management plans and the allocation of resources. It also needs to develop a systematic approach to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the service.

We were pleased to see that the service has made progress since our 2018 inspection. For example, we saw improvements in:

- staff training;
- collecting and sharing information about risk sites;
- safety inspections of buildings;
- managing staff performance; and
- provision and use of IT.

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

Staff training has improved, with a programme in place. The most important skills, such as commanding incidents and wearing breathing apparatus, have been prioritised. Computer-based training planners have been introduced in stations. As a result, the service can make sure its staff are properly trained to deal with emergencies and keep the public safe.

There is an effective programme to inspect buildings and make sure they are being managed safely. This work is delegated to a partner fire service. The Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service and its partner have developed a plan to inspect the highest risk buildings. The partner provides enough trained and experienced staff to complete the building inspections. This means the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service is confident the highest risk buildings are being managed safely by the people responsible for doing so.

The service needs to develop a co-ordinated plan to improve its approach to embedding EDI. The service recognises the importance of EDI, and there is senior level commitment to improving its approach in this area. But it doesn't have a plan to do this and hasn't set itself any objectives. It rarely uses equality impact assessments. This means it can't show that its plans and policies don't have a negative effect, or show what action it has taken to reduce any impacts, and to promote EDI.

I am pleased to see the progress the service has made since our last inspection. This progress is particularly noteworthy given the size and isolated island location of the service. While it still has work to do to improve the service it provides, it should also recognise the overall progress it has made.

I will stay in contact with the chief fire executive and their team in the coming months. We look forward to seeing the service make further progress following this latest inspection.



**Wendy Williams**

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

## Service in numbers



### Response

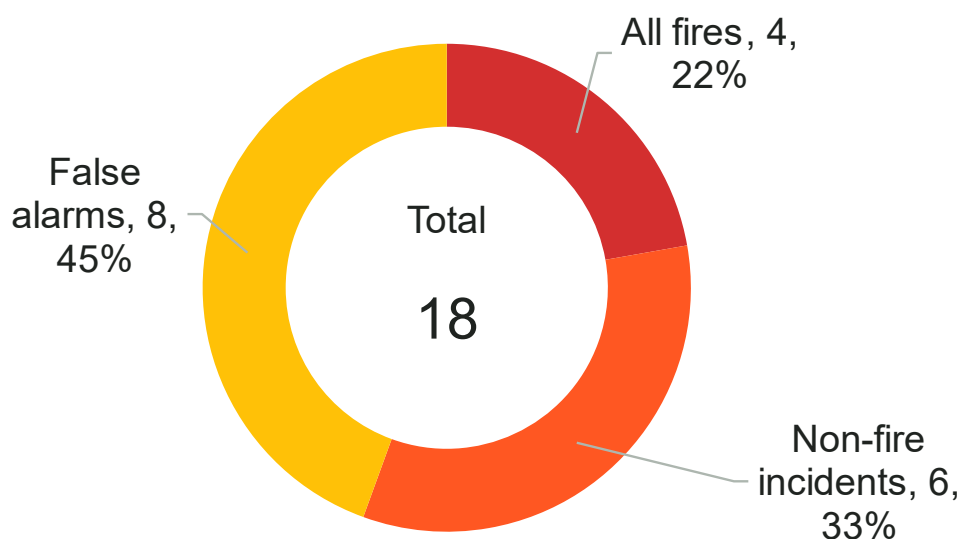
	Isles of Scilly	England
Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 30 September 2021	8.09	9.50
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	6.74	4.47
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2021	0.24	1.70
Average availability of pumps Year ending 31 March 2021	100%	86.4%



### Cost

Firefighter cost per person Year ending 31 March 2021	N/A	£25.02
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#### Incidents attended in the year to 30 September 2021

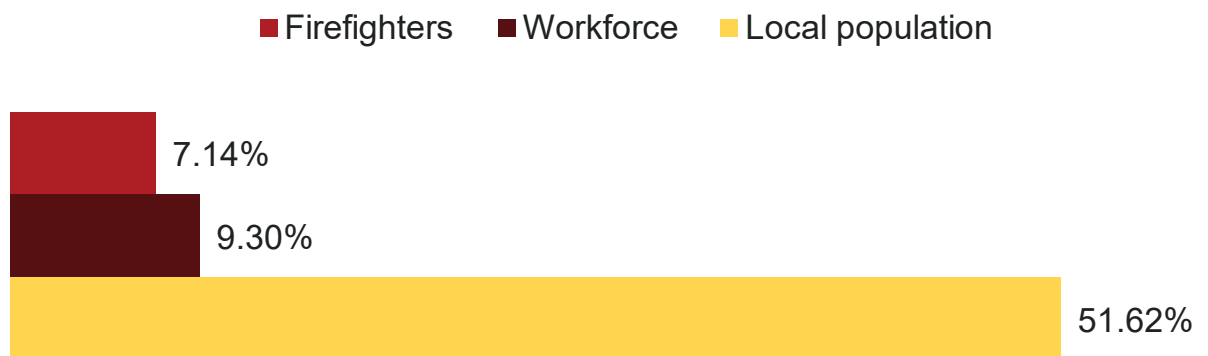




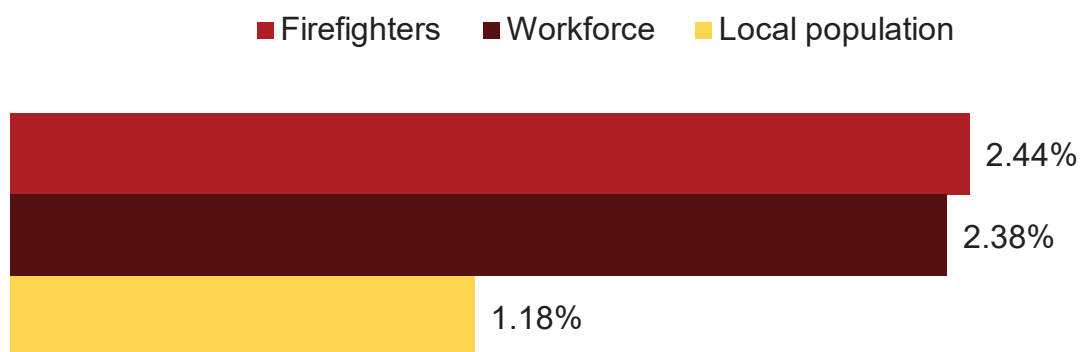
## Workforce

	Isles of Scilly	England
Five-year change in total workforce 2016 to 2021	7.50%	-1.60%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021	18.87	0.62
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2021	2.40%	64.4%

### Percentage of population, firefighters and workforce who are female as at 31 March 2021



### Percentage of population, firefighters and workforce who are from ethnic minority backgrounds as at 31 March 2021



For more information on data and analysis throughout this report, please view the [‘About the data’ section of our website](#).



# Effectiveness



# How effective is the service at keeping people safe and secure?



**Good**

## Summary

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An effective fire and rescue service will identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue risks its community faces. It should target its fire prevention and protection activities to those who are at greatest risk from fire and make sure fire safety legislation is being enforced. And when the public calls for help, it should respond promptly with the right skills and equipment to deal with the incident effectively. Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness is good.

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The service's [integrated risk management plan \(IRMP\)](#) identifies community risk and sets out measures to manage this. It would benefit from making better use of firefighters' knowledge of their local risks to build its community risk profiles. Collection and management of information about risk sites has seen a notable improvement.

There are five inhabited islands in the Isles of Scilly. The largest island is St Mary's. The other four islands – St Martin's, Tresco, St Agnes and Bryher – are referred to collectively as 'the off-islands'. Safety visits to homes on the off-islands continue to be completed annually. Firefighters have a good understanding of risk in their local communities. They recognise [vulnerability](#) and take appropriate [safeguarding](#) measures. The service needs to get better at overseeing the prevention work it commissions for the island of St Mary's.

Protection has improved, with a clear plan to inspect buildings based on their risk. The service gives advice about building safety management to local businesses. Where necessary, it uses its powers to enforce safety improvements. Response to emergency incidents is good, with notable progress in training, particularly commanding incidents. Debriefing after incidents has got better, but more work is needed to share learning.

Overall, the service has improved since our first inspection in 2018. Protection is now graded as good, with the other three sections maintaining good also. The service continues to be rated as good for effectiveness.

## Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



### Good (2018: Good)

Isles of Scilly 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. Arrangements should be put in place through the service's prevention, protection and response capabilities to prevent or mitigate these risks for the public.

#### Area for improvement

The service should make sure it uses firefighters' local risk knowledge and the outcomes from its prevention activity to build its community risk profiles.

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

### The community risk profile is based on a range of information

The Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service has assessed an appropriate range of risks and threats after a thorough integrated risk management planning process. When assessing risk, it has considered relevant information collected from a range of internal and external sources and datasets. This includes:

- data about the residents of and visitors to the islands;
- information about the business economy and economic welfare of residents;
- drug and alcohol needs assessments; and
- records of the incidents the service has attended over the previous nine years.

Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service supports the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service in researching and developing its IRMP.

The Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service undertook a residents' survey while it was developing its 2019–22 IRMP. Given the size and nature of the island community, this is an appropriate way for the service to consult. It has used quotes from the survey in its IRMP to give context to its risk-reduction plans. For example, it highlights that the majority of respondents to the survey felt that sharing fire stations with local ambulance, police and Royal National Lifeboat Institution teams is beneficial.

## **The IRMP clearly shows how risk will be managed**

After assessing relevant risks, the service has recorded its findings in an easily understood IRMP. This plan describes how prevention, protection and response activity is to be used to mitigate or reduce the risks and threats the community faces, both now and in the future. For example, the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service is providing community safety training to young people through schools and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme. It is also making sure the business community is safe through building safety inspections. And it is providing a range of appropriate firefighting and specialist rescue equipment at its fire stations.

The IRMP includes a range of performance measures. These are meant to help monitor and measure progress against the priorities and objectives set out in the plan. But the information given isn't enough for the public to see how effective the service's plan is at reducing risk. Nor is it clear how progress will be reported in a way that can be easily found and understood by the public.

The service should consider adopting an appropriate set of performance measures for its forthcoming community risk management plan (CRMP). (The CRMP will replace the IRMP). These should have a clear reporting process and enough detail so the public can see and understand how well the service is managing risk.

## **There have been improvements in the way information about risk is collected and shared**

We were pleased to see improvements in the way the service collects, reviews and shares information with its firefighters about risk.

We found that there is a clear plan to review and update information about the highest-risk sites on the islands. The records we checked were up to date and completed to a good standard. This means firefighters have accurate and up-to-date information to keep themselves and the public safe during emergency incidents.

The service collects and shares information from prevention, protection and response. Since our last inspection, the service has provided computers for fire stations. These are used to share information such as health and safety updates, new operational procedures and learning from operational debriefs. The service also shares information with station supervisors by email and orally, either face to face or by phone.

## **Local knowledge isn't always used to update the community risk profile**

The service's firefighters have a very good understanding of the people and risks in their local communities. This is particularly so for the off-islands, which are very small communities. They recognise when people are vulnerable and need help, either from the fire service or other care and support organisations.

This is a valuable source of risk information which isn't always written down or recorded. The service should consider what aspects of local community risk information should be recorded and how this can be used to update its community risk profile.

### **Firefighters have better access to operational information, but need more training in using the system**

Firefighters can use the computers on their stations to access a large amount of information to help with their work. This information is provided by the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service's partner service, Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service, and also comes from national sources, such as [national operational guidance](#). It includes information about risk sites, operational procedures and learning from emergency incidents on the islands.

The service has given its staff guidance and support on using the computers and accessing the available information. However, this needs more time to become fully established. We found that not all firefighters were comfortable or confident in using the new computer system and finding the information they need.

## **Preventing fires and other risks**



### **Good (2018: Good)**

Isles of Scilly 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 sector, and with the police and ambulance services. They should provide [intelligence](#) and risk information with these other organisations when they identify vulnerability or exploitation.

#### **Area for improvement**

The service should make sure it has appropriate arrangements in place to oversee and scrutinise the progress and quality of prevention work delivered by its prevention partner.

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

## **The service's prevention plans are based on local risk**

The service sets out its prevention plans in its IRMP. The activities it plans to complete are clearly linked to the risk profile in its IRMP. It has highlighted that people over the age of 80 are at greatest risk from a fire in their home, with men at greater risk than women. The service has also identified seven factors that affect the likelihood of people experiencing a fire at home:

- smoking;
- living alone;
- poor housekeeping;
- limited mobility;
- mental health issues;
- taking medication, including illegal drugs; and
- consuming alcohol.

[Home fire safety checks \(HFSCs\)](#) make up much of the service's prevention work. Firefighters visit all homes on the off-islands annually. The service has commissioned airport firefighters to complete most visits on St Mary's.

It also has other work planned to help people understand fire risks at home and how to reduce them. This includes offering the public visits to the fire station on St Mary's, staff attending local community events, and working with children through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme at the Five Islands Academy on St Mary's.

The service has close links with adult social services. Social services send the fire and rescue service referrals for HFSCs if they think people are at risk. And, when the fire and rescue service carries out its own HFSCs, it will refer vulnerable people to social services where appropriate.

## **Better oversight is needed of prevention work commissioned from other organisations**

The service has a contract for airport firefighters to complete aspects of the prevention programme. These include HFSCs on St Mary's and delivering the Duke of Edinburgh's Award training. We found the service has limited oversight of the progress and the quality of this work.

Despite contracting the work to a partner, the service maintains overall accountability for it. It should take steps to make sure it has better oversight and governance arrangements for the contract with the airport, and assure itself about the progress and the quality of work being carried out on its behalf.

### **Prioritisation of prevention visits needs to be clearer**

Firefighters visit every home on the off-islands annually. They offer safety advice and, where needed, fit or replace a smoke detector. The service also provides and funds electric deep-fat fryers, fire blankets and other safety equipment to reduce the risk of fire at home. If urgent referrals are received from partners, off-island firefighters complete these as soon as possible.

It isn't clear how routine prevention visits and referrals on St Mary's are prioritised when delivered by the service's partner. The service should make sure prevention work on St Mary's is effectively prioritised so those at greatest risk are visited first.

### **Records for prevention work need improvement**

The service should improve its prevention recording system. The forms we reviewed were completed inconsistently. Currently, records are analysed manually, and staff can't look back further than three years. This is inefficient and limits the service's ability to use information from its prevention work to evaluate the effectiveness of its approach, or to inform its community risk profiles.

### **Staff are confident completing home fire safety checks**

While there is currently no formal training, staff we spoke to were confident in their ability to complete HFSCs. They showed an understanding of the fire risks likely to be found in the home and of the support they could give. For example, following a safety concern raised during a visit, the fire service installed a specialist alarm system to protect a vulnerable resident. Firefighters also recognised situations when they should refer people to other care agencies for support.

The service has started to give training on HFSCs. The first sessions for firefighters from St Mary's and the airport took place during our inspection. The service plans to extend training to staff on the off-islands later this year. We look forward to seeing this programme and the benefits it provides continue.

### **Staff recognise vulnerability and make appropriate safeguarding referrals**

Firefighters receive a safeguarding refresher through their mandatory annual training. Staff we interviewed can recognise the signs of vulnerability and make referrals to appropriate safeguarding organisations. They know their local communities well and told us about occasions when they had identified safeguarding problems. This included identifying a vulnerable person after an emergency and making a referral for support to adult social services. They were confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly.

Staff refer to a flow chart when they have concerns about a vulnerable person. A copy is carried on fire engines and is available at the stations. However, not everyone we spoke to was aware of this. The service should remind staff about the flow chart. This will help make sure safeguarding is carried out appropriately and consistently.

## **The service collaborates well with partners**

As there are few fires on the islands, the service works with a range of organisations to identify and reduce other community risks. These include Devon and Cornwall Police, South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

In recent years, the service has become a more active member of the Isles of Scilly's community safety partnership. This is a local initiative led by the Council of the Isles of Scilly, aimed at addressing and tackling community safety issues. Through the partnership, the service contributes to promoting community health, safety and well-being. This includes highlighting fire safety messages, and outlining the prevention services it can offer to help keep people safe.

The service is recognised by the community safety partnership for having a good understanding of local risks and being able to support partnership activities. The service receives referrals for HFSCs from adult social services, the community safety partnership and a local care provider. In turn, the service has its own arrangements to refer people to social services, when it believes they are at risk or need support.

The service receives information about community risk through the community safety partnership. This is based on the partnership's local risk analysis. The service is starting to share some risk information with the community safety partnership. This work is in its early stages. We look forward to seeing how this develops.

## **The service takes a proportionate approach to tackling fire-setting**

There are few fires on the islands. There is also a minimal problem with nuisance and deliberate fire-setting. When problems are identified, the service works with its police and environmental health partners to understand the cause of the problem and take proportionate preventive action. This includes working with local schools, where pupils receive presentations about undesirable behaviours, including fire-setting.

## **Prevention work isn't evaluated to see if improvements can be made**

We didn't find any evidence to show that the service evaluates its prevention work. For example, it collects a range of information from people when it does home fire safety visits. However, it doesn't use this information to inform its community risk profiles, or to work out if it needs to change or amend its safety visit programme.



## Protecting the public through fire regulation



### **Good (2018: Requires improvement)**

Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service is good 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 (RBIP) for enforcing the legislation.

#### **Area for improvement**

The service should review its protection and prevention property records to make sure that all commercial buildings, including recently converted bed and breakfast accommodation, are included in the protection database.

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

#### **The protection plan is aligned to risk**

The service's overall approach to protection is set out in its IRMP. It highlights a range of planned activities to reduce the risk and consequences of fire in commercial buildings on the islands. These are linked to its risk profile and include:

- developing a risk-based plan to inspect commercial buildings;
- inspecting commercial buildings after a fire;
- encouraging the installation of sprinklers; and
- working with partners to improve water storage in farms that are remote or have limited water supplies.

Because of the specialist skills needed and the size of the service, it has formally delegated delivery of its protection programme to its partner, Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service. We were pleased to see positive improvements in this programme since our previous inspection.

## **Protection inspections have returned to normal following COVID-19**

We considered how the service had modified its protection activity during our COVID-19-specific inspection in October 2020. At that time, we found that it had adapted its protection work well, using webinars and other virtual communication methods to advise businesses about how to stay safe. Since then, we are encouraged to find that Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service has resumed face-to-face safety inspections of the island's highest-risk buildings. Records from the service showed these were all inspected by the end of March 2022.

### **Inspections focus on highest-risk buildings**

Given the small size of the community, there is a limited number of high-risk buildings on the islands. The service has worked with Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service, its protection partner, to review its local risk profile. It has adopted Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service's definition of high risk as the basis of its RBIP. Under this definition, high-risk buildings on the islands include:

- the hospital;
- the residential care home;
- hotels; and
- bed and breakfast accommodation.

Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service has developed an RBIP, which it completes on behalf of the service. The highest-risk buildings are inspected annually under this programme. This work was affected during the pandemic, but we were pleased to see that all buildings were inspected during 2021–22.

The service has recognised that a significant number of buildings on the islands are being converted into bed and breakfast accommodation. While some sample inspections have been completed, the service hasn't yet reviewed its buildings database to make sure all new bed and breakfast accommodation is included.

### **Inspections are completed consistently and to a good standard**

We reviewed a range of audits of different premises across the Isles of Scilly. These included audits that were carried out:

- as part of the service's RBIP;
- after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applies; and
- where [enforcement action](#) had been taken.

The audits we reviewed were completed to a high standard and in a consistent, systematic way. The service and its protection partner regularly meet to discuss progress of the inspection programme and exchange protection risk information they have identified. This allows Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service to make changes to

the building risk information given to firefighters and Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service to adjust the programme of building inspections when needed.

### **Work should be assured to confirm quality and consistency**

There is limited quality assurance of the protection work completed for Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service. The service's partner doesn't regularly quality-assure the work of its staff. As a result, inspections carried out on the islands aren't always checked to make sure they are consistent and in line with Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service's inspection policy. The service should consider, in discussion with its partner, how to address this so it can be confident in the quality and consistency of protection work.

### **Enforcement is applied proportionately to make sure people are safe**

The service has made increasing but proportionate use of its enforcement powers. In particular, this has improved since the pandemic in 2020–21, when very little on-site protection work took place.

The service gave us data that showed it issued seven informal notifications and one prohibition notice in 2021/22. This is an increase when compared to the previous year, when it didn't issue any notices. It shows the service is prepared to use its enforcement powers when appropriate.

### **Protection work is properly resourced**

Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service has allocated enough qualified protection staff to meet the requirements of the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service's RBIP. A small team of appropriately trained and accredited staff carry out all inspections and site visits. The work is overseen by a manager, who also meets regularly with the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service's station manager to discuss progress of the RBIP and exchange risk information.

### **The service responds quickly to building and licensing consultations**

The service responds to building and licensing consultations in a consistent and timely way. It consistently meets its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. In 2020/21, the service responded to all its building regulation (1 of 1) and licensing (3 of 3) consultations in time.

### **The service advises businesses about the importance of keeping their buildings safe**

We inspected the service to see how it responded during the early stages of the pandemic. We found that it had supported businesses as the first lockdown lifted by giving fire safety advice and guidance to business owners and building managers via webinars. This was well received.

We were pleased to find that this approach has continued. As well as carrying out fire safety inspections of buildings, the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service and Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service also hold meetings with the business community to explain the importance of managing safety in their buildings. This includes holding business safety surgeries at St Mary's Fire Station and working with the leisure industry ahead of major events like the World Pilot Gig Championships, an annual boating event held on the islands.

## Responding to fires and other emergencies



### **Good (2018: Good)**

Isles of Scilly 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 area.

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

### **Fire service response meets the islands' needs**

The service has an appropriate range of fire engines, trained firefighters and equipment to meet the risks presented by the islands' communities. There is a fire station on each inhabited island. Firefighters are on call, undertaking other work when they aren't called to respond to emergencies.

Some of the off-island communities are very small, with narrow and uneven roads. The service uses specially converted and equipped tractors and trailers to make sure it can access as much of the islands as possible. It provides specialist equipment to deal with incidents likely to occur on the islands. This includes equipment for chemical spillages and road traffic collisions. The service also shares space in some of its fire stations with other emergency partners, including the police, ambulance and coastguard.

## **The service responds promptly to emergency calls**

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. The service sets out how it will respond to emergencies in its IRMP. It aims to get a crew of four firefighters to all incidents. However, it recognises that due to limited resources on the off-islands, an initial response may be made with three firefighters. The service provides support to the off-islands, sending firefighters by boat from the nearest island and from St Mary's. For larger incidents, there are arrangements for Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service to send staff to support the service and give tactical advice to incident commanders by phone. This was used during a recent fire on the Porthmellon industrial estate on St Mary's.

Due to the low number of calls and the unique setting of the service, care is needed when comparing the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service with other services. Home Office data shows that in the year ending 30 September 2021, the service's response time to [primary fires](#) was 11 minutes and 52 seconds.

## **The service has good fire engine availability**

To support its response plans, the service aims to have its six fire engines available at all times. The service consistently achieves this, with 100 percent availability recorded for the year ending 31 March 2021. We were pleased to see that the service has improved its system for monitoring the availability of its firefighters.

## **There are notable improvements in incident command**

We are pleased to see that the service trains and assesses its incident commanders regularly and properly. This was an area for improvement we identified in our last inspection.

Instructors from Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service visit the islands to train the service's incident commanders and assess their skills. The service has recognised that the small number of incidents on the islands limits the opportunities for incident commanders to maintain their skills. So, it trains and tests their skills annually rather than every two years, which is the minimum recommended nationally. This helps the service to safely, assertively and effectively manage the range of incidents that it could face.

As part of our inspection, we interviewed incident commanders from across the service. The incident commanders we interviewed told us they are familiar with the national best practice for risk assessment, decision-making and recording information at incidents. They were also confident to use [operational discretion](#) and felt they would be supported by the service if they did.

## **Control staff are involved in debriefs, but more exercises would be beneficial**

Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service's critical [control team](#) takes emergency calls and despatches fire engines to incidents for the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service. We interviewed staff from this team as part of our inspection.

We are pleased to see Cornwall's control staff integrated into the Isles of Scilly's debrief and assurance activity. Cornwall's control staff can use an online debrief form to share feedback after incidents. We also heard examples of two incident debriefs that control staff attended in 2021. Control staff told us that they noticed improvements in radio messages after they highlighted areas for improvement during incident debriefs.

While they are involved in the islands' debriefing activity, there is less opportunity for Cornwall's control staff to take part in training and exercises with the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service. We were told about an emergency planning exercise that took place at the Isles of Scilly Airport in February 2022 and some training that Cornwall's control staff provided for the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service in April 2022.

The number of exercises that take place is limited by the size of the service. However, the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service should look for other ways to include Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service control staff in their training and exercise plans.

## **Access to risk information has improved**

We reviewed how the service collects information about high-risk sites and buildings. We also looked at how it makes this information available to firefighters when they attend emergencies.

The service has made improvements to the way it collects and updates risk information. When we last inspected, this information was held in paper records. We are pleased to see the service has since improved. The information is now available in electronic format, on a central system that all staff can access using the computers at their stations.

Risk information is still stored in paper records carried on fire engines for firefighters to use at an emergency. This is so that firefighters can access this information when out on a call to keep the public and themselves safe. Reassuringly, the service has invested in portable computers which can be used to access risk information. These computers will shortly be fitted to fire engines so firefighters can read risk information more easily at an incident. We look forward to seeing the completion of this work.

We reviewed a sample of risk records. The information we reviewed was up to date and detailed. It could be easily accessed and understood by staff. Where appropriate, information given by the protection team is included in the records.

## **Incident debriefing has improved, but more work is needed to share learning**

As part of our inspection, we looked at the service's arrangements for reviewing operational performance and debriefing emergency incidents and exercises. We are pleased to see the service has made improvements in this area since our last inspection. However, more work is needed to make sure that all firefighters can access shared learning, and that suggested improvements are followed up on and completed.

The service routinely carries out what it calls [hot debriefs](#) immediately or shortly after an incident. Firefighters and control staff can record their observations and suggestions for improvement using an online form. A structured debrief has also been introduced for larger and complex incidents.

Staff told us about developments in incident debriefing. They could point to improvements that had been made following a debrief, for example better arrangements for calling boats to transport crews between islands during an emergency. However, not all staff knew where to find the learning that had been shared after an incident. This learning is recorded in the service's new intranet hub or distributed in an operational bulletin, produced by Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service, which is sent to stations.

The service recognises that there are further improvements it can make. It is looking at ways to make sure that staff have been informed about learning from incidents. It should also consider an appropriate way to record and track the progress of actions and improvements that have been identified from debriefs.

## **The service is introducing national operational guidance**

We are pleased to see the service has a clear approach to introducing national operational guidance. This was an area for improvement we identified during our last inspection.

The Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service works with Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service to understand changes in national operational guidance. It reviews new policies and procedures that Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service has developed based on national operational guidance. It then adopts or adapts these, so they are appropriate for the Isles of Scilly. Its incident command and breathing apparatus training and procedures align to national operational guidance. Work is planned to further align the service's operational procedures to national operational guidance as the national project progresses.

## **There are appropriate arrangements to keep the public informed about emergency incidents**

The service has some arrangements in place to inform the public about incidents and help keep them safe during and after incidents. These include a social media feed and a fire service section on the Council of the Isles of Scilly website.

However, while members of the council and senior council officers will make media statements during larger incidents, there are limited ways for real-time information to be given to the public and local community. The service should consider how it can improve the provision of real-time information about incidents to the public by working more closely with the council's communications team.

## **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).

Because of its remote island location, we didn't assess the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service for its ability to respond to major and multi-agency incidents. But we did assess the service when we reviewed its response to the initial stages of the pandemic in 2020.

We were pleased to see that the service adapted well to the pandemic. It worked closely with its partners to maintain the islands' resilience and support the Isles of Scilly's 'One Island' approach to provision of services and civil protection.

It supported the operational incident cell, a subgroup of the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly multi-agency [local resilience forum](#). The subgroup, which co-ordinated the island's COVID-19 response, took part in emergency planning and preparation exercises, and provided staff for an interim undertaker and mortuary service. The Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service adapted its training and response arrangements to reduce the risk to its firefighters. It started to introduce new IT to fire stations to improve communication with staff working on the off-islands.



# Efficiency



# How efficient is the service at keeping people safe and secure?



## Requires improvement

### Summary

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An efficient fire and rescue service will manage its budget and use its resources properly and appropriately. It will align its resources to the risks and priorities identified in its [integrated risk management plan \(IRMP\)](#). It should try to achieve value for money and keep costs down without compromising public safety. It should make the best possible use of its resources to achieve better results for the public. Plans should be based on robust and realistic assumptions about income and costs. Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service's overall efficiency requires improvement.

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Despite some improvement, there are areas of efficiency where more work is needed. The service needs to make clear links between the plans for managing risk in its new CRMP and its future financial plans.

It should make sure the agreements it uses to commission services and work from other organisations meet its requirements. Its oversight of these agreements should be strengthened, to make sure it gets what it has agreed and pays for.

The service improved the sustainability of its funding, financial plans and budget management support. This is partly due to work carried out by its parent authority, the Council of the Isles of Scilly. It uses its buildings well and collaborates effectively with other agencies and organisations on the islands. It has made good use of new IT systems to improve communication, productivity and share risk information.

The service's assessment for efficiency is now requires improvement.

## Making best use of resources



### Requires improvement (2018: Good)

Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at making best use of its resources.

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

The service's budget for 2022/23 is £558,293. This is a 1.9 percent increase from the previous financial year.

#### Area for improvement

The service needs to show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention, protection and response activities. This should reflect, and be consistent with, the risks and priorities set out in its integrated risk management programme.

#### Area for improvement

The service should review the agreements it uses to commission services to make sure their scope is clear and meet its needs. It should also strengthen its governance arrangements so there is adequate oversight and scrutiny of the agreements and the services its partners are providing.

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

#### More clarity is needed about how resources are allocated to reduce risk

The service's parent authority, the Council of the Isles of Scilly, has carried out significant work in recent years to improve its funding position and properly account for the resources it uses. The service has seen improvements as part of this work, including more sustainable revenue funding, the introduction of a funded ten-year capital plan and budget management support.

The service has allocated resources to its prevention, protection and response work. However, it wasn't able to clearly show us a rationale for the allocation of resources and how it links this to the risks and priorities identified in its IRMP. For example, its revenue budget shows inflation-based increases, rather than being aligned specifically to the risk-reduction plans set out in its IRMP.

The service recognises this as an area where it needs to improve. It sees the development of its next CRMP as an opportunity to better show the link between its funding decisions and its risk management plans. We look forward to seeing this progress.

### **Better scoping and oversight is needed for commissioned services**

The service has recognised that it isn't practical or cost-effective to commit its own resources to providing some of its functions. These include protection, prevention work on the island of St Mary's, and providing the range of specialist advice and supporting services it needs. As a result, it has adopted a different way of providing some of its services and support needs, by commissioning these from partner organisations in the South West.

However, the agreements used to commission work from partners need to be reviewed and updated. The existing agreements have been in place for some time, and it isn't clear if they fully meet the service's current requirements. The service should also strengthen its governance and oversight arrangements. This will allow it to make sure it is receiving everything it has commissioned and to hold its partners to account if needed.

The service recognises that it needs to review the content of, and management arrangements for, its agreements with Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service and the Isles of Scilly Airport. It plans to do this by the end of 2022.

The service reports progress on its plans publicly in its annual assurance statement and to the Council of the Isles of Scilly. However, it doesn't use a proportionate set of performance measures to show the public and its parent authority the effectiveness of its risk management plans. It had plans to develop a set of performance measures in 2021/22, but this hadn't been completed at the time of the inspection. We look forward to seeing this progress.

The service has continued to use the working arrangements it adopted during the pandemic. The provision of new IT to fire stations has improved communications between service managers and stations on the off-islands in particular.

Team meetings have become more effective, with staff no longer needing to take a boat journey to meet with colleagues and the service manager. The IT improvements have also been used to make it easier for staff to read up-to-date policies, safety information and briefings.

## **Collaborative arrangements are in place for delivering services**

The small size and location of the service and the community it serves means it needs to collaborate with other organisations to provide resilient and cost-effective services. It has established several collaborative agreements to achieve this. These include:

- Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service, which provides specialist training, emergency call handling and management, protection, IRMP development, and fire and rescue strategic support and management advice.
- The Isles of Scilly Airport, which completes prevention work on the island of St Mary's and carries out equipment maintenance and testing.
- Cornwall Council, which provides budgeting, financial management, and IT equipment and support.

The arrangements with Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service and the Isles of Scilly Airport align with the prevention, protection and response objectives set out in the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service's IRMP.

The service also maximises the use of its accommodation by sharing space at its fire stations with other emergency service partners. South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust and HM Coastguard have response bases in all the off-island stations. South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, Devon and Cornwall Police, and HM Coastguard also have access to meeting space at St Mary's Fire Station.

## **Business continuity arrangements are in place**

The service has effective, up-to-date business continuity arrangements in place to maintain its operational response. It also worked closely with the Isles of Scilly operational incident cell and its partners to develop and test resilience arrangements prior to the first COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020.

The service doesn't formally test its business continuity plan in full. However, due to the nature of the islands and the service's limited resources, elements of the plan are validated during operational deployment.

## **Arrangements are in place to reduce costs where appropriate**

The service faces challenges in reducing its costs. This is due to its small size and the additional expense related to providing goods, materials and services to a remote island location.

Wherever possible, it seeks to reduce costs by making purchases through its parent authority or Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service. For example, it purchases workwear through a contract held by the Council of the Isles of Scilly. It buys firefighting and protective equipment through purchasing frameworks held by Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service. The service recently negotiated with another fire service to buy

a second-hand fire engine, which is specifically suited to the challenges of the island's narrow roads. This allowed it to get an appropriate vehicle at a considerably reduced cost.

It has also changed the way some of its operational training is delivered. Staff from Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service now visit the islands to train and assess incident commanders. This reduces travel and accommodation costs as staff used to travel to the mainland for this training.

The service should consider how it builds on its existing approach so it can consistently show how it is reducing costs and achieving value for money.

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



### **Good (2018: Requires improvement)**

Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service is good 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.

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

### **Better budget management and financial plans are in place**

The service has focused on improving its financial plans and budget management alongside its parent authority since our last inspection. The majority of this work sits with the parent authority.

We are pleased to see the service now has a better view of its future financial requirements and plans its budget accordingly. It has a balanced three-year budget and has developed a ten-year capital replacement programme.

These improvements have allowed the service and its parent authority to properly account for their use of public funds and make investments for the future. For example, following a management restructure in 2020, it now employs a full-time station manager.

The station manager carries out most of the day-to-day management of the service. They work closely with council and emergency service partners on the Isles of Scilly, and with Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service. This helps to make sure the service has an effective emergency response and contributes to the One Island approach to maintaining community resilience on the islands.

There are examples of decisions the service has taken to improve the value for money it achieves. These include the partnerships with Cornwall Council, Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service and the Isles of Scilly Airport. The service should use examples from these partnerships to show a more systemic approach to achieving value for money.

### **Adequate reserves are available if needed**

As a department of the Council of the Isles of Scilly, the service doesn't hold its own [reserves](#). The council has improved its financial position in recent years and holds appropriate reserves. The service can call on these if needed.

We found that the service's plans have sustainable revenue and capital funding for three and ten years respectively. As a result, the service doesn't need or plan to use reserves to fund its work. We found that should there be a specific need, the service will be able to make a business case to the council for additional funding. This would be subject to appropriate officer and political scrutiny. We were assured that the service would be funded according to need.

### **There is effective provision of buildings and vehicles**

As a very small service operating across five isolated islands, the service has limited scope to make changes to its buildings. It has 5 stations, all of which have been either replaced or upgraded in the past 12 years. It has accommodation in its stations for staff from South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, HM Coastguard, and Devon and Cornwall Police. As a result, the service increases the community benefit of its stations while reducing costs for partner services.

Maintenance of the service's buildings is carried out by the council as part of its wider asset management plan. The council has taken this approach to improve the quality of service provided while reducing costs.

The service has six emergency vehicles, which it uses to serve the five inhabited islands. Its choice of vehicles has been influenced by the terrain and other features of the islands. This is particularly important as there are small communities where narrow, uneven roads make access difficult.

The capital plan includes funding to replace all the service's emergency vehicles over a ten-year period. One vehicle has already been replaced. The current plan is to replace the vehicles on a like-for-like basis. The service should make sure its capital plan is also aligned to its risk management plans. It can do this by reviewing the outcomes of the community risk assessment carried out in preparation for the

development of its new CRMP. It can then consider if it needs to change the specification of any replacement vehicles so they better meet the risk and demographic profile of the islands' communities. We were assured that there was flexibility within the capital plan to make such changes if needed.

### **The service makes good use of IT to improve effectiveness**

The service has taken advantage of new technology to achieve changes since the last inspection. Introducing new laptop computers with video conferencing technology to its stations has led to improvements:

- Staff and managers from the off-islands can meet with the service's station manager on a regular basis, without the time and cost associated with travelling to a single location.
- Training records are held on a central system, which allows management oversight without the need to travel to each island.
- Risk information, operational policies and learning materials are also held and managed in central systems. Staff can see consistent, up-to-date information.

Additionally, the service told us it will shortly provide mobile devices on its fire engines. These will allow firefighters to check risk information and operational policies when they are at an emergency incident. We look forward to seeing this work progress.

These are positive changes that have improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the service and its staff. However, they aren't always recorded and shown as part of an overarching organisational improvement plan. In particular, the service doesn't feature in the Cornwall Council IT strategy, and its parent authority, the Council of the Isles of Scilly, doesn't have its own IT strategy. The service should consider how it will link its future plans for its ways of working and its IT systems to the risk management work it includes in its new CRMP.

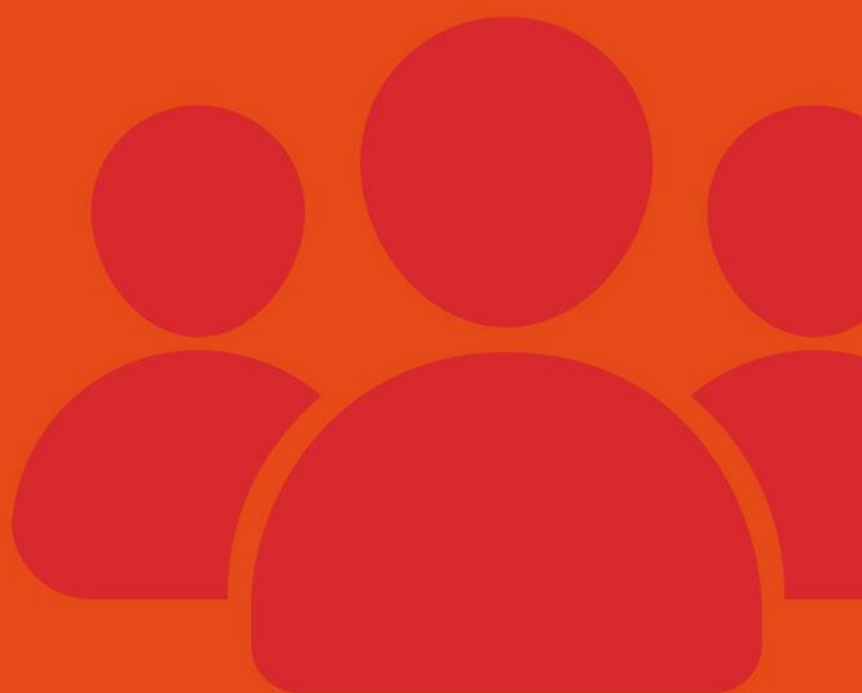
### **The service needs better resilience for continued improvement and future change**

The service has made notable improvements and change since the last inspection. It has achieved much of these through an organisational restructure and introduction of a full-time station manager.

There is an openness and acceptance that further improvements and change are needed. It should assure itself there is enough resilience to the station manager role, so it has the capacity to deliver further change and improvements.



# People



# How well does the service look after its people?



## Good

### Summary

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A well-led fire and rescue service develops and maintains a workforce that is supported, professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse. The service's leaders should be positive role models, and this should be reflected in the behaviour of staff at all levels. All staff should feel supported and be given opportunities to develop. Equality, diversity and inclusion are part of everything the service does and its staff understand their role in promoting it. Overall, Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service is good at looking after its people.

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The service has made clear improvements to the way it manages and supports its staff. There is a good culture, with positive behaviours shown at all levels of the organisation. Better support is available for physical and mental well-being, and staff know how to access it.

The service has yet to introduce a systematic approach to promoting EDI in the workplace and in the services it provides. It isn't able to clearly show if it has assessed the impact its plans and policies have on its staff and on members of the public. Nor can it show what action it has taken to reduce any negative impact.

Operational training has improved significantly. There has been a particular focus on safety-critical skills such as commanding incidents and wearing breathing apparatus. Personal development plans (PDPs) have been introduced, which help manage staff performance and career development.

Overall, the service has improved its people management rating since 2018. Culture and training are assessed as being good, but EDI and leadership development still require improvement. The service now has a rating of good for people management.

## Promoting the right values and culture



### **Good (2018: Requires improvement)**

Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service is good 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. Health and safety should be promoted effectively, and staff should have access to a range of well-being support that can be tailored to their individual needs.

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

### **The service's values are shown at all staffing levels**

The service has a well-defined set of values. Staff weren't always able to tell us what these were, but we saw behaviours that reflected the values throughout the service. Staff have a good understanding of their local communities and are committed to keeping them safe. Staff we spoke to felt they were treated fairly and with respect by their managers.

We are encouraged that the service has committed to the new national [Core Code of Ethics](#). Work to introduce the code was in its early stages when we carried out this inspection. All staff had received some initial training about the code, and the service intends to adopt the values as its own values when it produces its new CRMP in 2022. We look forward to seeing this progress.

Senior leaders act as role models. Staff generally felt senior leaders consistently showed the service's values. Staff we spoke to saw the service's senior managers as visible, respected and approachable.

### **There is good support for staff physical and mental well-being**

Since our last inspection, the service has improved the well-being support it provides for its staff. There are now well understood and effective well-being policies in place that are available to all staff.

Ill-health absence is monitored by the Council of the Isles of Scilly's HR team and the service's station manager. This allows early identification of, and a quick response to, any well-being concerns or patterns of ill-health. Information is also given to the chief fire executive, who reports to the council's operational leadership team.

An appropriate range of well-being support is available to support both physical and mental health. These include:

- an occupational health scheme;
- access to the island's dedicated mental health nurse;
- an employee assistance programme; and
- support and advice available through The Fire Fighters Charity.

There are good provisions in place to promote staff well-being. These include posters in the workplace, discussions with line managers, and information shared at team meetings. We were pleased to see the service has given all staff access to up-to-date policies and procedures through the recently developed intranet. Most staff we spoke to knew about the physical and mental health and well-being support available to them. They understood the procedures and knew how to access these services when needed.

### **Effective health and safety arrangements are in place**

The service has effective and well-understood health and safety policies and procedures in place. The service uses the Council of the Isles of Scilly's health and safety policy, which has recently been revised. Health and safety management is overseen by the service's station manager. Guidance, advice and support is provided by the council's health and safety lead. There are monthly meetings between the council and the service to discuss health and safety issues and to give advice.

Staff can access the health and safety policy and procedures through the intranet. The revised health and safety policy was communicated to all staff by the council and the station manager. Staff we spoke to and those who responded to our survey knew about the procedures that are in place to keep them safe. They were confident in the service's approach to managing health and safety. However, we found some aspects of how personal protective equipment fits firefighters, and how equipment testing is being recorded need closer monitoring by the service, to make sure the equipment is effective, and tests are carried out in a consistent way.

The service uses the council's secondary employment policy. It doesn't monitor the working hours of its staff as it is a secondary rather than the primary employer. While the service has had few incidents, managers we spoke to described how they would make sure the firefighters they were managing had adequate rest breaks if called to successive intensive incidents.

### **Staff absence is well managed**

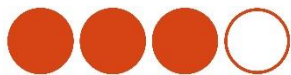
As part of our inspection, we reviewed the service's procedure for managing staff absence, including sickness. We looked at how this is applied in practice.

We found there are clear processes in place to manage absences for all staff. There is guidance for managers, who are confident in the process. Absences are managed well and in accordance with policy. The station manager maintains oversight of staff absence and makes sure absence procedures are started when required. The council's HR department gives advice and support.

Appropriate occupational health and well-being support is given to staff who are away from work. Records are generally well kept and in line with policy. But the service should make sure that all correspondence is recorded, including copies of emails.

The service told us it has low levels of staff absence. It doesn't report its absence figures nationally. It has recently introduced a new absence system which makes it easier to keep records and produce reports. It is considering whether it will now be in a position to report its absence data nationally.

### Getting the right people with the right skills



#### Good (2018: Requires improvement)

Isles of Scilly 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 [integrated risk management plans \(IRMPs\)](#), sets out their current and future skills requirements and addresses capability gaps. They should supplement this with a culture of continuous improvement that includes appropriate learning and development throughout the service.

#### Area for improvement

The service should make sure regular drill sessions are effectively planned, to maximise the time available for practical training.

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

#### Training has improved, but the service needs to do more work to fully establish the new recording system

We are pleased to see the service has made good progress to address the areas of improvement in staff training we identified during our 2018 inspection. It has concentrated its efforts to make sure its staff are properly trained and that their skills meet the needs of the IRMP.

Training and retesting for the risk-critical skills of incident command and breathing apparatus has been prioritised. There is a programme to make sure the skills of all staff are current. The records we reviewed were up to date and well maintained. Subject to a review of their skills, staff who can't be reassessed within the required timeframe are given additional time to attend a training course or are removed from using that skill until the reassessment has been satisfactorily completed.

The service has increased the frequency of its incident command training. This is a positive move, as it recognises its incident commanders have limited opportunities to maintain their command skills because there are very few incidents on the islands. Instructors from Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service visit the islands annually to train and assess incident commanders. This is more often than required by the national standard.

The service takes a proportionate approach to workforce planning. One-to-one meetings and regular contact with stations gives the station manager a good understanding of the workforce profile. This includes when vacancies are likely to occur and any skills gaps. Once approval is received to fill a confirmed vacancy, the service and council work together to recruit into the position.

Firefighters' development and continuation training is aligned to national standards. When the service identifies additional training requirements, it sources and provides training to support those. For example, it has recently provided training in [home fire safety checks](#) for its prevention partner. It will shortly extend this to firefighters on the off-islands.

The service has introduced a computer-based system to record the training completed by staff, and their competence. The system uses a standard training plan which aligns to the national occupational standards. It allows staff and managers to see the areas they need to focus on and to plan training sessions to meet these. It also allows the station manager to have an overview of training completion and competence levels for the whole service, and identify any gaps or areas which need further work.

This has been a big change for the service and its staff. Previously they used paper-based records and guidance. The service supported its managers and staff when the system was introduced. But more work is needed to establish the system, so all staff understand how to use it to plan and record their training. While some staff saw the benefits the system offers, others found it difficult to use.

Making sure training is completed is a challenge for a service which is entirely [on-call](#). The majority of station training takes place during evening drill sessions. This time is also used to complete maintenance, carry out equipment tests and record training. This limits the amount of time dedicated to maintaining operational competence.

## **The service offers an appropriate range of learning and development opportunities**

The service has focused on developing a culture of development and improvement since our last inspection in 2018. As well as operational training, the service provides annual mandatory training. This updates staff on a range of subjects they need for their work, including [safeguarding](#), health, safety and well-being, and the new Core Code of Ethics. Most staff feel the service offers sufficient learning and development opportunities to allow them to do their job effectively.

As an entirely on-call service, there are limited opportunities for staff to develop through training or taking on additional responsibilities or temporary promotion. The service does provide development opportunities and encourages staff to take on additional roles. For example, during their performance review, staff seeking promotion can request the opportunity to attend incident command training either as an observer or, if spaces are available, as a candidate.

The service also recently sent two managers on an incident diffuser course held by its partner, Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service. After a period of shadowing Cornwall firefighters, the staff will provide diffusing support for colleagues who have been called to traumatic incidents.

The service has one [wholetime](#) manager who carries out the day-to-day management of the service. This is a new role which has been introduced in the past two years. The service has supported the manager's development with a range of training to allow them to meet the requirements of their new role. This includes operational training such as incident command and training in health and safety management. The manager has a mentor and spends time with colleagues in Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service. This allows them to gain experience and learn additional skills from people working in a larger service.

The demands on the manager are significant and much wider than in most other services. The service should consider what additional and specialist training the manager needs to carry out their role now and in the future. It should also consider what additional resilience arrangements are needed to support the manager.

## **Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity**



### **Requires improvement (2018: Requires improvement)**

Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.

Creating a more representative workforce will provide huge benefits for fire and rescue services. This includes greater access to talent and different ways of thinking, and improved understanding of and engagement with their local communities. Each service should make sure equality, diversity and inclusion are firmly understood and demonstrated throughout the organisation. 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 taken 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.

#### **Area for improvement**

The service should make sure that all staff understand the benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion and their role in promoting it.

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

### **The service better engages with staff, and encourages feedback and challenge**

The service has improved the way it engages with its staff since our previous inspection in 2018. It has made changes to support this. These include:

- New IT equipment on stations which allows more frequent communication between service leaders and staff. This was introduced during the pandemic and has since become a permanent way of working.
- The introduction of a full-time station manager. This means staff have access to a manager who can respond to questions and enquiries about operational and service management issues. The station manager also visits all stations regularly to talk to staff and support local managers.
- The creation of a service newsletter to keep staff up to date on activities taking place in the service and to share information between the five islands.

Most staff we spoke to described their leaders as approachable, and said feedback was encouraged. The service gave us examples of how it has responded to staff feedback by providing new, improved radios for stations, and purchasing a different make of breathing apparatus equipment which staff prefer.



## **The service works to make sure it can respond quickly to staff workplace concerns**

The service uses the Council of the Isles of Scilly's policies for grievance, and bullying, harassment and discrimination. We found the policies were clear and comprehensive, although neither had been reviewed and updated for over four years.

The service hasn't received any staff grievances for over five years. It has worked to improve communications between staff and managers, and is creating a safe environment for staff to raise issues and report concerns.

The service told us it is an active member of the council's [restorative justice](#) programme. This is to make sure staff concerns are dealt with as soon as possible, and particularly focuses on racism.

The service should assure itself that its staff know how to raise workplace concerns including bullying, harassment and discrimination, and that they are confident using the informal and formal avenues available to them for this.

## **The service is working to recruit a more diverse workforce**

The service uses the council's recruitment policy, which it has adapted for firefighter recruitment. The policy is fair and honest. It includes a commitment to equal opportunity throughout the shortlisting, interview and selection process. It also commits to making reasonable adjustments to make sure there is no prejudice in the recruitment process.

Historically, the service's workforce has been made up mostly of men. The service is trying to change this. However, as it is a small on-call service, there are fewer recruitment opportunities, so this will take some time.

The service told us that it is working with its local communities and promoting itself through schools and gyms to encourage more diverse and younger applicants. It has also amended its advertising material to appeal to a more diverse group of people and to those who may not see the fire service as a job for them. It emphasises its commitment to equal opportunity on its recruitment posters.

The service is making progress in this area. In the year ending 31 March 2021, out of a total workforce of 43, it was employing four female staff, three of whom were firefighters. This is an increase since the last inspection and represents 9.3 percent of the service's employees. The service also employs one firefighter from an ethnic minority background. This is reflective of the local population.

## **The service needs to develop a systematic approach to equality, diversity and inclusion**

The service needs to do more to make sure EDI is properly considered. It needs to take appropriate measures to meet the needs of its communities and staff. Given the small size of the island community and the large number of people from diverse backgrounds who visit the islands each year, this is particularly important.

The service recognises it has more to learn, and there is commitment at a strategic level to improve its approach to EDI. But this has yet to develop into a clear, systematic plan supported by relevant processes and appropriate objectives.

In particular, the service doesn't have a robust and effective assessment process to show it has considered the potential equality impact of its plans and policies or taken action to reduce this. Also, the majority of the policies we saw hadn't been subject to an impact assessment, despite there being space to record the assessment in the documents.

Staff we spoke to generally described the service work environment as open and inclusive, although they didn't always fully understand the reasons for diversity being important. There was some evidence of outdated approaches towards women, but this appeared to be improving.

Access to staff groups and networks is a positive way to support minority groups in the workplace and to promote EDI. The service has established links with some network groups, including Women in the Fire Service UK and the Asian Fire Service Association. But there was limited evidence that staff regularly interact with these groups.

Staff are given an annual EDI refresher as part of their mandatory training. The service told us it would like to improve the training by making it more personal and face to face. We look forward to seeing the plans for this develop.

## **Managing performance and developing leaders**



### **Requires improvement (2018: Requires improvement)**

Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement 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.

### **Area for improvement**

The service should assure itself that it has a fair and effective process to identify and offer staff development opportunities, and align these to staff's personal development plans.

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

### **Staff performance management has improved**

We are pleased to see the service has introduced a PDP process since our last inspection. This allows it to develop and assess the individual performance of all employees. Staff told us about annual meetings with line managers, to review their performance and progress against objectives that are specific to them. Staff are also able to discuss any issues or concerns they wish to raise and consider their future aspirations in the service.

Staff who want to develop additional skills in their current role or who want to prepare for promotion can request opportunities do this at their PDP meetings. But this wasn't fully understood by all the staff we spoke to. The service should make sure all staff understand the link between the PDP process and their development for current and future roles.

Most staff we spoke to described the PDP process as a positive and supportive experience. Line manager discussions were seen as productive and were welcomed. However, there was evidence that some staff didn't see the benefits of the PDP and were yet to fully embrace the process. This view was also reflected in some responses to our staff survey.

### **The promotion process is clear, but the service needs to clarify the promotion criteria**

The service doesn't have its own promotion policy. It uses the Council of the Isles of Scilly's policy. This is adapted to meet the service's requirements when it needs to make permanent and temporary promotions.

There is limited staff turnover in the service, so promotions are infrequent. However, without service-specific criteria for promotion, it isn't clear to staff what skills and behaviours they would need to develop and demonstrate during the promotion selection process. The service should consider how it can be clearer and more consistent in relaying the requirements for promotion to complement its existing PDP process.

We reviewed files for a selection of permanent and temporary promotions that took place over the past two years. We found the selection processes were managed objectively and consistently, with an appropriate range of assessment methods and spread of experience in selection panels.

Staff generally felt the promotion process was fair.

### **Leadership development is limited**

The management structure of the service is very streamlined. There is one management level between fire stations and the chief fire executive. All station-based staff are on-call, while the station manager is the only wholetime firefighting role.

The service carries out some limited workforce profiling through the PDP process and one-to-one discussions with the operations manager. This allows it to understand staff's future plans, and its likely need for new staff, managers and skills.

Staff who express an interest in, and those who show potential for, promotion are encouraged to seek opportunities to develop their skills and experience. The arrangements are informal. The service has to manage demand and expectation, as opportunities for progression are limited and largely island specific.

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