




PCC and CFO Service report acknowledgement record

Version Dec 2024

Force	Staffordshire
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner	Ben Adams
Chief Fire Officer	Rob Barber
Title of inspection	State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2024–25
Published Date	5 th November 2025
Inspectorate	 Making communities safer
Summary of inspection	<p>This annual national assessment sets out HMICFRS's view of the effectiveness and efficiency of England's 44 fire and rescue services (FRSs). It highlights progress since inspections began in 2018, while identifying persistent challenges in leadership and culture, clarity of role and responsibilities, data and performance, and the pace of sector reform. The report notes the April 2025 transfer of fire policy to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as a significant opportunity to accelerate long-awaited reform, including professionalisation of the workforce and stronger national accountability. It reiterates previously-made national recommendations and sets expectations for services to embed continuous learning, adopt Fire Standards consistently, and strengthen prevention, protection and response outcomes.</p>
Grade	
Recommendations	<p>Services should have effective governance structures and workforce plans</p> <p>Services should focus on improving persistent issues to achieve better outcomes for the public</p> <p>Decisive action will support sector reform</p> <p>Services need to be committed to continuous improvement</p>



Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's initial response

I welcome this year's annual assessment and support the national direction it sets. The themes align with my priorities for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) including safer communities, professional standards, and visible performance. While HMICFRS's recommendations are directed nationally, I expect SFRS to evidence local alignment and traction.

Locally, I recognise the progress SFRS has made with partners through the Home from Hospital and Falls services. I am pleased to see that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service efforts in supporting vulnerable individuals in Staffordshire has been recognised as promising practice. These joint arrangements are reducing avoidable demand on the health system, helping people return home safely, and providing earlier interventions that prevent harm. They also demonstrate how SFRS can target vulnerability, deploy capacity intelligently, and collect outcome data that shows tangible benefit for Staffordshire residents.

I also acknowledge the strides made in leadership and performance monitoring over the past year. The service has strengthened its governance cadence, improved the clarity of ownership for key risks, and matured its performance framework so that trends, exceptions and learning are surfaced earlier and acted upon. This gives me greater confidence that improvement activity is purposeful and sustained.

Chief Fire Officer's response

We welcome The State of Fire and Rescue Report for the years 2024/25 published by His Majesty's Inspector (HMI) of Fire and Rescue Services, and we are taking consideration of how this national assessment reflects on Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services.

The HMI stated that Fire and Rescue Services have a crucial role in protecting the public and making communities safe – recognising that every day, staff show unwavering dedication and professionalism.

The report welcomed the promising signs of progress in services' protection and fire safety departments. Additionally, he expressed concern about the competing demands facing staff with Fire Safety expertise and ongoing difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled officers, which we have experienced locally in Staffordshire.

The chief inspector commented that most services are increasing their focus on improving productivity and supporting the well-being of their workforces. He also went on to say that services need to prioritise improving leadership at all levels, and to create and maintain a positive organisational culture.

It was pleasing to see that in this National report Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service is positively mentioned in several areas:



Firstly, for our progress against the Areas for Improvement from our last inspection and the way in which focussed leadership has contributed to positive progression. We were highlighted as one of the services who have closed the majority of these Areas for Improvement - indicating strong improvement. The report stated this was a result of clear strategic planning, robust action plans and focused leadership.

There were also references to Promising Practice within Staffordshire in regard to our work with health - Staffordshire's Falls Response Team and Home from Hospital Team were highlighted and as you know these are delivered in partnership with local health bodies. And at the time of the inspection we had attended 1,197 falls incidents and supported 599 hospital discharges, these numbers are now significantly higher. Both of these initiatives directly support the service's Community Risk Management Plan priorities.

I was very pleased to see that Staffordshire was referenced specifically a number of times throughout the report in a positive light and this reflects the hard work from everyone within the Service. We continue to work hard to make improvements to our service delivery to the communities of Staffordshire and Stoke-On-Trent.

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's overall comments

The assessment rightly recognises dedicated staff and real progress which has been the result of clear strategic planning, robust action plans and focused leadership. It also underlines familiar blockers: inconsistent adoption of Fire Standards, variable use of data, pockets of poor culture and slow reform. My expectation for Staffordshire is disciplined practical changes that the public can see.

In Staffordshire, I particularly welcome the recognition of our partnership working with the NHS, including the Home from Hospital and Falls services. These collaborations are reducing risk, supporting patient flow and independence, and offering measurable benefits for communities. I also recognise the service's strengthened leadership and its more rigorous performance monitoring, both of which are beginning to translate into clearer priorities, faster decision-making and better assurance to local governance boards and public performance meetings.

I will maintain a clear line of sight from HMICFRS findings to our local delivery and results. The CFO will report transparently to the Public Performance Board on a standardised set of metrics and narrative that shows impact, not activity. Where plans slip, we will reset and communicate openly. Where good practice emerges, we will scale it. I will continue to advocate nationally for reforms that enable local services to succeed while ensuring rigorous local accountability.