

# Fire and Rescue Performance Framework 2006/07 – Overview and Outcomes

## Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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### 1 Purpose of Report

This report provides Members with a summary overview of the Fire and Rescue Performance Framework 2006/07 (introduced by the Audit Commission in 2006), together with the recently published performance results in respect of this Fire Authority and other English Fire and Rescue Authorities.

### 2 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of this report.

### 3 Background

To assess performance of fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) the Audit Commission introduced in 2006 the Fire and Rescue Performance Framework 2006/07. The Framework recognises that FRAs are currently in the process of improvement planning and that the early signs of improvement are only now starting to emerge. The Framework has, therefore, been designed to be proportionate and measure the scale and sustainability of this improvement.

The Audit Commission states that the Framework used has been proportionate and focused on improvements made against the fire and rescue Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPA) and measured the Service as experienced by the community.



The approach to measuring improvement and performance in FRAs has been through a performance framework with three elements:

- A **use of resources assessment**. This has assessed the FRA across a broad range of financial issues and provides a scored assessment, including whether the FRA is providing value for money.
- An assessment of improvement, or deterioration, in performance measured through a **scored direction of travel assessment**. The assessment has been outcome focused and draws together all assessments on the FRA.
- A **scored service assessment**, which has had an emphasis on service delivery and includes an operational assessment of the quality of service delivery.

#### 4 Performance Framework 2006/07 - Overview

The Performance Framework is a complex process, comprising of several objective and subjective elements. Full details can be accessed via the Audit Commission's website:

[www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa/fire/fireframework.asp](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa/fire/fireframework.asp)

A summary of the Framework's key assessment areas is outlined below.

#### 5 Use of Resources Assessment

The use of resources assessment provides a scored assessment across a broad range of financial issues, including a judgement on the Authority's arrangements for securing value for money. It focuses on the importance of having sound and strategic financial management to ensure that resources are available to support the Authority's priorities and improve services. The assessment has been challenging and is directly comparable with those made by the Audit Commission for police authorities, councils and health bodies. It is based on the same structure of auditors' judgements, using Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs).

It has 5 themes covering:

- Financial reporting
- Financial management
- Financial standing
- Internal control
- Value for money



## 6 Scored Direction of Travel Assessment

The scored direction of travel assessment is an important element of the Performance Framework. The purpose of this assessment has been to provide a concise statement on an Authority's improvement, or deterioration, since the baseline CPA assessment. The assessment recognises progress since the CPA process in 2005, and qualifies it by stating how well the Authority is performing and whether or not it is considered that it will continue to improve.

The assessment focuses on two KLOEs:

- What evidence is there of the Authority improving outcomes?
- How much progress is being made to implement improvement plans to sustain future improvement?

## 7 Scored Service Assessment

The service assessment is made up of two elements: the operational assessment of service delivery; and the performance information element. Both of these elements have been scored separately and given a 1 - 4 score, which has then been combined to give the overall service assessment score.

The operational assessment covers the following areas:

- Risk analysis;
- Prevention and protection;
- Operational preparedness;
- Call management and incident support; and
- Emergency response.

The performance information element score has used a set of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs), rather than inputs or processes, which cover the full range of services provided so far as is possible. The BVPIs assessed are:

- F1 Primary fires per 10,000 population
- F2 Accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings
- F3 Deaths arising from accidental dwelling fires per 100,000 population
- F4 Injuries arising from accidental dwelling fires per 100,000 population
- F5 Percentage of accidental dwelling fires confined to room of origin
- F6 False alarms caused by automatic fire detection per 1,000 non-domestic properties attended
- F7 Number of deliberate primary fires (including vehicles) per 10,000 population



## 8 Performance Framework Outcomes

The results of the Audit Commission's Performance Framework assessments for all FRAs were formally published on 5 April 2007 and the results for each individual FRA may be accessed via the Audit Commission's website:

[www.audit-commission.gov.uk/authority\\_list.asp?CategoryID=ENGLISH^576](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/authority_list.asp?CategoryID=ENGLISH^576)

The full reports for this FRA may be accessed via the Brigade's website:

[www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/Management/performance-planning/performance-framework-results.htm](http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/Management/performance-planning/performance-framework-results.htm)

## 9 Scored Judgements

The Audit Commission has now published scored judgements for all 47 English FRAs. A copy of the Commission's National Report is appended.

The judgements contained within the national report provide a statement of performance in four areas (see table 1 below). Scrutiny of the assessment results, combined with the previous CPA score, provide the following summary scorecard results for this Fire Authority.

**Table 1 – 2006/07 Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority Scorecard**

<b>FRA Performance Framework 2006/07 SCORECARD</b>	
<b>CPA 2005 Score:</b>	Excellent
	✓ <b>Good</b>
	Fair
	Weak
	Poor
<b>Use of Resources:</b>	4 - Performing Strongly
	✓ <b>3 – Performing well</b>
	2 – Adequate performance
	1 - Inadequate performance
<b>Direction of Travel:</b>	Improving strongly
	✓ <b>Improving well</b>
	Improving adequately
<b>Service Assessment:</b>	Not improving adequately or Not improving
	✓ <b>4 - Performing Strongly</b>
	3 – Performing well
	2 – Adequate performance
	1 - Inadequate performance

Analysis of this Fire Authority's performance compared with that of other FRAs, at a national and regional level, has been undertaken by officers to determine relative positioning. It has not been possible to determine an accurate overall league position, as the performance assessment framework



comprises of four independent areas of audit (each with its own separate scoring metrics) that cannot be combined to present an overall score. Furthermore, at the time of analysis it was noted that the Direction of Travel results for 14 FRAs were under review and, therefore, unpublished.

Notwithstanding the above, however, Table 2 below provides a summary overview of the spread of scores for FRAs across the four areas of the Scorecard.

**Table 2 – 2006/07 Summary Scorecard of all Results**

FRA Performance Framework 2006/07 SCORECARD		Spread of Scores Nationally	Spread of Scores Regionally	SWFA Position
<b>CPA 2005 Score</b>	Excellent	2		
	Good	20	5	✓
	Fair	18		
	Weak	5		
	Poor	2		
<b>Use of Resources</b>	4 - Performing Strongly	3		
	3 – Performing well	37	3	✓
	2 – Adequate performance	6	1	
	1 - Inadequate performance	0		
	<i>Under Review</i>	1	1	
<b>Direction of Travel</b>	Improving strongly	1		
	Improving well	22	3	✓
	Improving adequately	10	1	
	Not improving	0		
	<i>Under Review</i>	14	1	
<b>Service Assessment</b>	4 - Performing Strongly	13	3	✓
	3 – Performing well	18	1	
	2 – Adequate performance	14	1	
	1 - Inadequate performance	0		
	<i>Exempted FRAs</i>	2		

What can be deduced from the above Table is that out of 47 English FRAs:

- For Comprehensive Performance Assessment only two FRAs scored above this Fire Authority.
- For Use of Resources only three FRAs scored above this Fire Authority.
- For Direction of Travel only one FRA scored above this Fire Authority.
- For Service Assessment this Fire Authority, together with twelve other FRAs, achieved the maximum score.
- Within the West Midlands region, this Fire Authority has consistently achieved the best performance, together with other FRAs, where applicable.



These results present a very positive picture of this Fire Authority's performance, performance that has been presented by the Audit Commission as one of only four case studies set out within the Commission's National Report (as appended, see paragraphs: 33-38, pages 10 and 11).

## **10 Addressing Performance Improvement Issues**

Performance improvement planning is currently being undertaken at three levels:

### **National Issues**

As with CPA, the Audit Commission's National Report (appended) sets out a range of priority areas for performance improvement. These issues will, of course, require due consideration by the Fire Authority.

### **Regional Issues**

West Midlands Regional Management Board has undertaken proactive measures to progress generic areas for improvement within this region. Following scrutiny of the published results it is anticipated that the capacity building programme will be utilised through the auspices of the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership to implement improvement action plans in a collaborative manner.

### **Local Issues**

Several initiatives have already commenced to address areas for improvement previously identified through the performance framework process. At a strategic level, officers have undertaken a detailed review of the Service and those emerging issues external to the organisation. The results of this review have led to the development of improvement priorities that will be published within the Fire Authority's Best Value Performance Plan 2007/08. The prepared improvement priorities have been scrutinised by both the Audit Commission's Relationship Manager and the Audit and Performance Management Committee (29 March 2007).

## **11 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any consequential financial implications arising from the actions necessary to introduce improvement priorities will be the subject of a separate report.

## **12 Legal Comment**

The Audit Commission Act 1998 places statutory responsibilities upon the Audit Commission to undertake assessments of local government bodies, which includes Fire Authorities.

Local government bodies are required by the Local Government Act 1999 to participate in the assessments undertaken by the Audit Commission.



## 13 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have determined that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed. It is however fully recognised that the proposed arrangements set out within this report to prepare and publish a revised Performance Plan will be subject to Equality Impact Assessments as deemed applicable at the appropriate times.

## 14 Appendix

Fire and Rescue Performance Assessment

## 15 Background Papers

### Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority:

18 October 2006 Report 18 Fire and Rescue Service Performance Framework 2006/07 – Overview

### Audit and Performance Management Committee:

7 September 2006 Report 7 Fire and Rescue Performance Framework 2006/07 - Service Assessment

29 March 2007 Report 7 Fire and Rescue Performance Framework 2006/07 – Overview and Outcomes

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk); the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balance Score Card	*	Integrated Risk Management Planning	*
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity	*	Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	*
Comprehensive Performance Assessment	*	Operational Assurance	*
Equality and Diversity		Retained	*
Efficiency Savings		Risk and Insurance	*
Environmental		Staff	*
Financial	*	Strategic Planning	*
Fire Control/Fire Link		West Midlands Regional Management Board	*



**Fire and rescue**

**National report**

**April 2007**

**Appendix** to report on  
Fire and Rescue Performance Framework 2006/07 -  
Overview and Outcomes  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority  
25 April 2007



# Fire and rescue performance assessment

Scores and analysis of performance in fire and rescue  
authorities 2006



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Printed in the UK for the Audit Commission by CW Print

Design and production by the Audit Commission Publishing Team

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First published in April 2007 by the Audit Commission for local authorities and the National Health Service in England, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

# 1

## Key messages

- 1 Fire and rescue services are continuing to respond positively to the challenges of fire modernisation and improvement. Greater emphasis is now being placed on fire prevention and community safety. However, the rate of improvement is variable with the gap between the strongest and weakest performers widening. For many services the results of improved fire prevention activity has yet to result in a sustained reduction in fires.
- 2 The majority of fire services are improving well. One service, West Yorkshire, is improving strongly. The remainder are improving adequately and no service is failing to improve.
- 3 Over two-thirds (69 per cent) of fire services are performing strongly or well in planning for and responding to emergencies. The rest are performing adequately. This is an encouraging picture, but the service assessment also shows that services' prevention and protection activities tend to be more effective than their emergency response.
- 4 The majority of fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) are on track to meet the national target to reduce accidental fire deaths by 2010. However, seven services are not. They need to sustain their focus on this area if they are to meet the target in three years' time.
- 5 Health and safety is a clear priority for the service. Firefighter training is becoming risk based, but training for retained (volunteer) firefighters and staff above watch manager is less consistent.
- 6 Most fire services are slowly improving their approach to equality and diversity, but from a low base. Current performance remains poor when compared with other public sector organisations. While there is evidence that fire services are starting to embrace the equality agenda, more remains to be done. The workforce in most fire services is not representative of the community that it serves. This means services are less able to engage with the communities that are often most at risk from fire death and injury.
- 7 Fire services are engaged in a range of projects and initiatives aimed at improving the safety of their communities and reducing fire risk. Because most fire services are not yet able to identify measurable outcomes from this work, evaluating costs and benefits is a significant challenge.

- 8 For many of the smaller fire services their capacity to deliver the range of modernisation activities and their ability to achieve economies of scale are concerns. However, some smaller services have managed capacity constraints well and can demonstrate high levels of performance.
- 9 Fire services are increasingly working well in partnership with other public and voluntary sector organisations to deliver community fire safety initiatives. Good results have been achieved in increasing home fire risk assessments and reducing arson. Partnership working is also enabling fire services to contribute effectively to crime reduction and road safety initiatives, particularly through engagement with children and young people.
- 10 The use of resources assessment considers how well the fire service manages and uses its financial resources. Forty (85 per cent) services are performing either well or strongly in their use of resources. Three fire services achieved the highest score (performing strongly) and no service is performing below minimum standards.
- 11 Thirty-six services are performing well in delivering value for money. The remaining 11 services are performing adequately. The majority of services are meeting their efficiency targets and a number are now beginning to tackle more challenging issues such as staffing structures and levels of fire cover. In doing so they will be better placed to continue to deliver value for money in the future.

# 2

## Background

- 12 The fire and rescue service is a highly regarded and important local service. The service is responsible for dealing with fires, delivering community fire safety to address fire prevention, and for responding to road accidents, flooding and major emergencies. In England 379 fire deaths were recorded in 2005, a 34 per cent reduction since 1995 (**Ref. 1**). For an increasing number of fire services, responding to non-fire-related incidents, such as road traffic accidents, now represents the majority of their work.
- 13 There are 47 fire services in England serving over 50 million people. Collectively, they spent over £2.1 billion of public money in 2006/07. This is funded through a mix of council tax and grants from government. Sixteen fire services are provided by county councils and the remainder are separate statutory bodies known as combined or metropolitan fire services. London is the only regional fire service. Each fire service is accountable to an FRA which comprises local, elected councillors.
- 14 Two-thirds of all fire stations are staffed by retained (volunteer) firefighters who are local people volunteering to be available to respond to emergencies and improve community safety alongside their other jobs. Only in the major cities are firefighters full-time.
- 15 There is considerable variation in the size and local circumstances facing the fire service. There are predominantly rural authorities with relatively small populations and large geographical areas. Others are mainly urban with large populations and relatively compact geographical areas. These factors contribute to the difference in fire risks between areas. Numbers of fire service staff range from around 40 in the Isles of Scilly to nearly 7,000 in London.

## Fire modernisation

- 16 The service is undergoing an extensive programme of modernisation in line with the Fire and Rescue Services National Framework (**Ref. 2**). This involves a more targeted and risk-based approach to fire prevention, protection and emergency response. It seeks to make the fire service an increasingly community safety oriented, rather than reactive service. The process of modernisation, as outlined in the national framework, includes six areas for improvement. These are:
  - fire prevention and risk management;

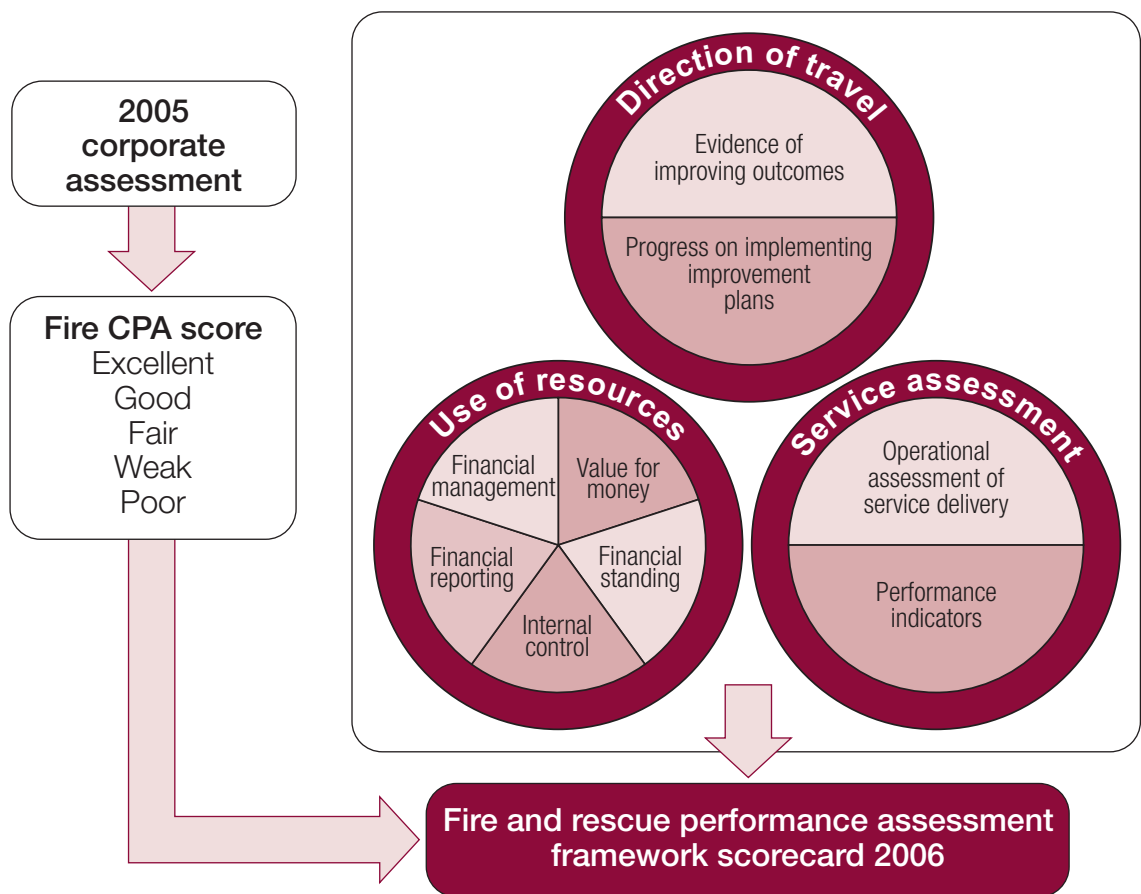
- working together – the regional approach;
  - effective response;
  - resilience and New Dimension (equipment and procedures to deal with major incidents resulting from terrorist threats and natural disasters);
  - fire and rescue staff, including equality and diversity; and
  - workforce development.
- 17 In 2005 the Audit Commission assessed the fire service’s progress in implementing this modernisation programme. At that time we found that the service:
- was performing generally well and delivering innovative services in a number of areas particularly around youth engagement and arson reduction;
  - had a clear appetite for change, but that the pace of change varied;
  - needed members to provide active political leadership, scrutiny and accountability;
  - planned well for improvements, but the capacity to deliver them needed improvement;
  - had weaknesses around the management of staff skills and capacity; and
  - while financial management was good it could not always demonstrate value for money.
- 18 Further details of this work can be found at: [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/fire](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/fire).
- 19 This report gives an overview of the scores from the performance assessment of the services in 2006. This is the first year that the Commission has produced a fire and rescue performance assessment. References in this report to fire service mean the fire and rescue service and its responsible FRA.

## Performance assessment

- 20 The fire and rescue performance assessment 2006 (**Figure 1, overleaf**) was designed to be proportionate and to measure the scale and sustainability of this modernisation and improvement. It comprises three scored elements that assess the progress of modernisation. These are:
- a direction of travel assessment on the extent of improvement or deterioration in services;
  - a use of resources assessment on how the service manages its finances including an explicit judgement on the extent to which the service provides value for money; and

- a service assessment, which looks at how effectively the service plans and responds to emergencies and incidents for local residents and businesses.

**Figure 1**  
Fire and rescue performance assessment 2006



Source: Audit Commission

21 A number of direction of travel assessments are subject to review. This is indicated in tables and text where appropriate.

## Fire and rescue Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

- 22 Fire CPA, undertaken in 2005, assesses how well fire services are delivering fire and rescue services for local people and communities. It measured the progress fire services were making in modernising at that time.
- 23 The Commission gave each FRA a corporate assessment rating of either excellent, good, fair, weak or poor. Our inspectors looked at issues such as how the service worked within the community to make it safer and prevent fires from happening; staff training and development to ensure they could do their job; the approach to equality and diversity issues; and financial and performance management. They were assessed against local and national priorities in the context of the challenges faced by the service in meeting the needs of their communities.
- 24 Since the Fire CPA results were published in July 2005 the service has continued modernising. The Fire CPA results act as a baseline in the current performance assessment.



# 3

## Direction of travel

- 25 The direction of travel assessment indicates the extent of any improvement or deterioration in service since the 2005 Fire CPA assessment. It considers the current level of service and assesses the ability to improve further. The four categories of improvement are improving strongly, improving well, improving adequately and not improving adequately (or not improving).
- 26 All fire services are improving. The majority of services are improving well and one service, West Yorkshire, achieved the top category for direction of travel and is improving strongly. No service was assessed as failing to improve adequately.
- 27 Thirteen of the fire services that achieved a good or excellent Fire CPA score in 2005 are now improving strongly or well. Overall, the combined and metropolitan fire services are addressing the modernisation agenda more successfully than county council fire services. Those fire services serving larger populations tend to be improving faster, although there are examples of some smaller services, such as Norfolk and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, providing a good, and improving, level of service. Nine services that achieved a fair Fire CPA score, and one that was categorised as weak, are now improving well.
- 28 Nearly half (47 per cent) of fire services were categorised as good or excellent in 2005. These services are improving at a greater rate than those that started from a lower base. **Table 1** shows that four out of five fire services categorised as good or excellent in 2005 are now improving well or strongly. This level of improvement is not reflected in those services categorised as weak or poor.
- 29 The gap between the best and worst fire services is widening. Adequately performing services need to improve faster if they are to match the best. Those that started from a lower base have put in place systems and processes designed to improve the service but this has not yet translated into improved outcomes.

**Table 1**  
**Those services rated highly in Fire CPA continue to improve**

CPA 2005 score	Not improving	Improving adequately	Improving well	Improving strongly
Excellent	0%	0%	100%	0%
Good	0%	21%	71%	8%
Fair	0%	38%	62%	0%
Weak	0%	33%	67%	0%
Poor	0%	100%	0%	0%

**Note:** This analysis excludes direction of travel assessments that are subject to review.

**Source:** Audit Commission

- 30** Fire services that are improving well share a number of characteristics. They:
- are clearly and systematically addressing the modernisation agenda set out by government;
  - have made changes to the way they provide fire and rescue services across the whole of their area and can now see the results of these changes in reducing the number of incidents and calls;
  - have improved partnership working and this is providing additional capacity to the service, particularly for community safety and arson reduction activities;
  - are successfully strengthening their focus on community fire safety while retaining good performance in responding to emergencies;
  - have made tangible progress addressing equality and diversity;
  - have significantly improved performance management; and
  - have improved political leadership of the fire authority which is now providing a clear direction, scrutiny and challenge for the service.
- 31** While there have been improvements, more remains to be done. The services that are improving well are doing so because they have made these changes at a quicker rate than those that are performing adequately. The services that are improving adequately risk being left further behind if this situation is allowed to continue.

- 32 Fire services are putting in place systems to improve performance for the future. Understanding the relationship between the costs and the quality of service delivered remains a challenge. The majority of services are unable to demonstrate measurable outcomes from their improvement initiatives. While these may be difficult to assess, it is important that the service can demonstrate that the improvements have come from changes they have made.
- 33 Capacity and the ability to achieve economies of scale remain an issue for many smaller services, but some are rising to this challenge.

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## Case study 1 – Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

### Changing the service to meet needs

The service is performing well in priority areas and in relation to the national framework. It is consistently one of the best performing services with regard to the numbers of injuries, deaths, calls to false alarms and malicious fires. The service is focusing on its key local priorities and actively targets home fire risk assessments and community safety in rural communities. This has reduced the risk of fire in rural Shropshire. Its ‘Keep warm, keep well’ programme is responding to the needs of older people with initiatives to reduce deaths due to the cold and to improve community safety by fitting security devices such as door chains.

The service is providing good value for money. Its costs compare well with others and have remained below average. It has a strategy for achieving efficiencies from various activities such as the reduction in unnecessary aerial appliance cover and the use of XL cabs. It has invested an additional £824,000 in the retained service following an extensive review, resulting in improved availability of retained appliances. As a result, recruitment levels of retained firefighters are better, community safety is promoted in high-risk rural areas and fire cover has improved.

The service has plans for further modernisation. Plans are SMART;<sup>1</sup> clearly linked to budgets; integrated with each other; cover the medium to long term; and support the vision and aims of the FRA. The service has improved its capacity to deliver changes by restructuring. Plans are more reflective of community needs and the service has invested in partnership work to improve its capacity.

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<sup>1</sup> SMART – specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time bound.

- 34 The fire service is a key partner in local crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs). CDRPs bring together local services to work collectively to tackle and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. The service should also work with local strategic partnerships and engage with local area agreements (LAAs) led by local councils to improve the quality of life in an area. Many services are using these partnerships to increase capacity but a significant number of fire services struggle to engage with partners locally, finding it difficult to develop shared priorities and effective working relationships.
- 35 Services are increasingly using partnerships to deliver community fire safety initiatives and some good results have been achieved for home fire risk assessments and reducing arson. In some cases, partnership working is also enabling the fire service to make a contribution to reducing crime and improving road safety.
- 36 While the groundwork for effective partnerships has been put in place, this has yet to show successful outcomes. However, the better performing fire services are able to measure how initiatives have improved outcomes for their communities.
- 37 Equality and diversity in the service matters. The service needs to reflect the communities it serves and draw on the skills from all in its community – not just those who would traditionally be attracted to working for it. Attitudes towards encouraging applicants from all sections of the community are changing. But positive action to encourage women, black and minority ethnic (BME) and part-time applicants, particularly for firefighter posts, is limited in all but a few services.
- 38 Overall the fire service is making limited progress in improving equality and diversity. It currently performs poorly in this respect and there is more work still to be done. There are few BME and women firefighters: 2.1 per cent of staff are from BME communities and 2.4 per cent of the operational workforce are women (2003/04). The service is starting to embrace the equality agenda and to understand how this will make it a better service more attuned to community needs. The service has implemented a variety of initiatives to improve the situation, but in many areas the workforce is not representative of the communities it serves. At the moment it is unlikely that any service will meet the national target for women firefighters. There are a few services that are working hard to address this issue, as illustrated in **Case study 2, overleaf**.

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## Case study 2 – London Fire Brigade

### Recruitment and retention for BME firefighters

London has been successful at recruiting and retaining firefighters from under-represented sections of the local population. As a result it is recruiting nearly 20 per cent of its entrants from BME communities and aims to increase that to 25 per cent.

It has an Outreach team consisting of operational fire officers and fire and rescue service staff. They undertake a range of activities to promote the service as a career for women and people from BME communities. The team has a database of nearly 20,000 BME candidates who have expressed an interest in joining the service. One thousand candidates a year attend open days which explain to potential applicants the selection process and what life is like as a firefighter. The open days pioneered by London Fire Brigade are recognised as best practice and attract interest from large companies such as British Gas and the National Grid.

The Outreach team works closely with community and faith groups explaining the service as a career option. It runs training programmes specifically designed to support potential BME applicants in reaching the standards they need. Outreach also works with community fire safety officers to ensure that recruitment messages are linked to fire safety messages in the community.

London uses serving BME firefighters as role models in all its media campaigns. It makes extensive use of advertorials, articles linked to advertisements, to reinforce the message that the fire service is a ‘career for us’. Media campaigns and messages are targeted to maximise interest and applications from BME communities.

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- 39** The fire service has a high level of public respect. Through its increasing community fire safety and prevention work, it is meeting people who have not traditionally engaged with the service. The service needs to be able to interact well with all groups in its community if it is to be effective in terms of reduced incidents and improved safety. The speed of change in local communities means that the service has to find new ways of engaging **(Ref. 3)** – particularly with those who are at a greater risk of fires. Its ability to engage with hard-to-reach communities and encourage fire prevention will be limited if it can not make contact with these communities.

- 40 The service is gaining a better understanding of the communities that it serves. There is some evidence of good community engagement and work targeted to vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups. A number of innovative approaches have been developed including work with traveller communities and new migrants from Eastern Europe. An increasing number of specialist advocates are being used to engage with faith, cultural and ethnic groups to good effect. Examples include those used in Merseyside to engage with BME communities, disabled communities and drug and alcohol abusers.

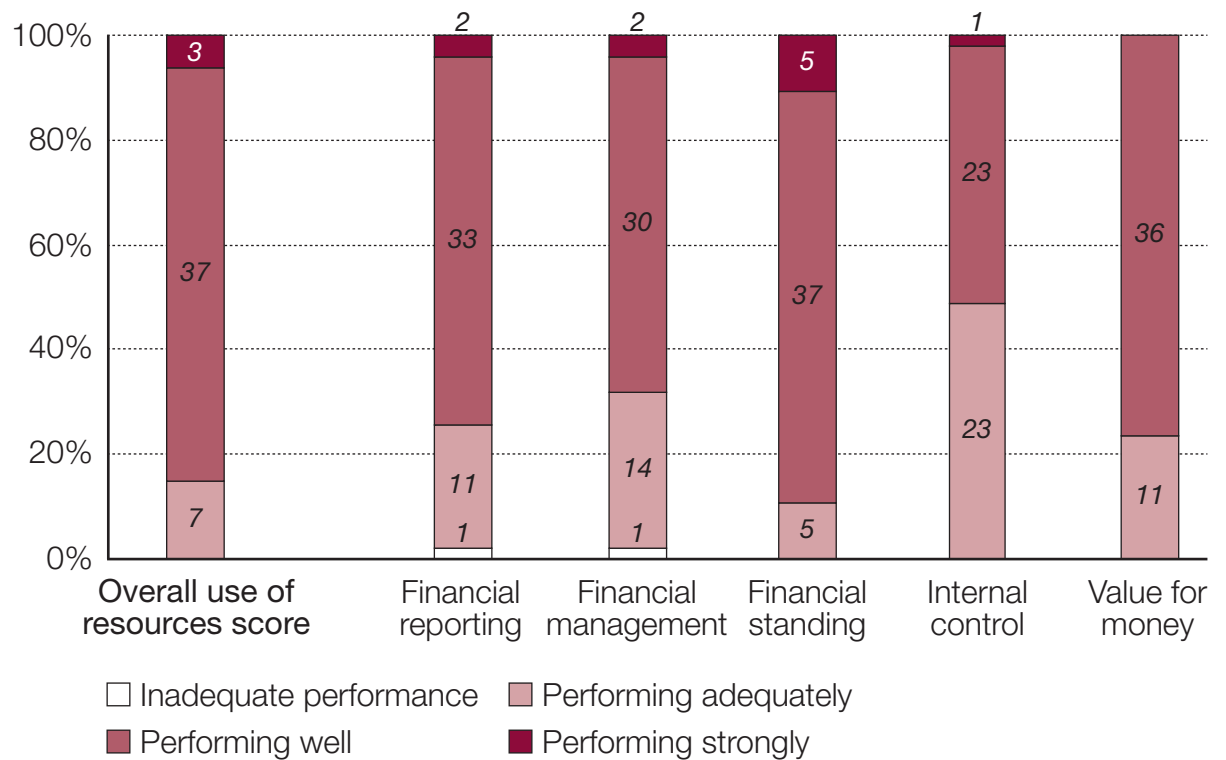
# 4

## Use of resources

- 41 The use of resources assessment considers how well the fire service manages and uses its financial resources. It focuses on the importance of having sound and strategic financial management to ensure that resources are available to support the service's priorities, improve service delivery and provide value for money. Services were scored on a four-point scale: 1 (inadequate performance), 2 (adequate performance), 3 (performing well), 4 (performing strongly).
- 42 Most fire services (85 per cent) perform either well (level 3) or strongly (level 4) in the use of their resources. No service performs below minimum requirements in this assessment. Three services (Greater Manchester, Merseyside, and Kent and Medway) achieved the highest score.
- 43 The financial position of fire services is being well managed. Financial standing, assessing how well a service manages its spending within available resources, is the best performing theme within our use of resources assessments. Eighty-nine per cent of services achieve a score of 3 or 4 and this theme also shows the highest number of FRAs in the top category.
- 44 Internal control assesses whether a service maintains a sound system of checks to manage its financial risks and ensure proper use of public money. Nearly all services meet or exceed minimum requirements in this area.
- 45 Use of resources contains an explicit judgement on whether the service provides value for money. All services are performing at or above minimum requirements on this theme with 36 services (77 per cent) performing consistently above minimum requirements. No services scored at the very highest, or lowest, level for providing value for money.
- 46 In order to improve value for money further, the service needs to have a greater understanding of how the money spent on the service affects the quality of the service delivered. Benchmarking with other fire services and other public services is underdeveloped and this does not enable effective cost and quality comparisons.

**Figure 2**  
**Four out of five services are performing at or above minimum requirements**

Strongest performance is shown in financial standing.



**Source:** Audit Commission

- 47 The majority of services are meeting their efficiency targets. Fire services have generally made the necessary improvements to deliver efficiency gains and a number are now beginning to tackle some of the more difficult issues on staffing structures and levels of fire cover that will enable them to continue delivering value for money in the future.
- 48 Fire services that perform well in their use of resources share a number of characteristics:
  - the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) is fully integrated into business planning with explicit links to financial planning. These fire services are beginning to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of their work and can quantify outcomes;
  - budget monitoring and performance monitoring are linked;



- fire authority members are actively involved in budget setting and monitoring, with clear reports explaining the reasons for changes;
- budgets are delegated down to the lowest operational levels enabling effective delivery of local initiatives and securing better local accountability;
- forward planning takes a long-term view; and
- business risks are managed alongside fire and rescue risks.

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### **Case study 3 – Kent Fire and Rescue Service**

#### **Managing spending within available resources**

Thorough planning and a shared understanding between managers and members has allowed the service to establish and maintain good financial standing. The service does this by:

- setting a target level of reserves with members and informing them of all changes and the reasons why;
- determining the level of reserves through a financial risk assessment;
- having robust revenue and capital budget monitoring processes in place;
- its medium-term financial strategy explicitly taking into account future events and building them into the budget setting process;
- prudential indicators featuring as part of the regular monitoring reports received with all variances commented on; and
- presenting a performance update report to members, including details of performance against service delivery targets, and corporate health targets as well as performance against financial budgets and other survey results.

The budget is built using a robust process, which requires growth to be bid for based on a clear business case, which is then considered against competing priorities prior to being incorporated into the budget proposals for members to consider.

This has resulted in the service delivering within budget for the last three years and, following the change to a precepting authority, the service has successfully built up its reserves to prudent levels. It is also able to exploit available opportunities for the benefit of the service, for example sharing the local public service agreement performance reward grant with the county council.

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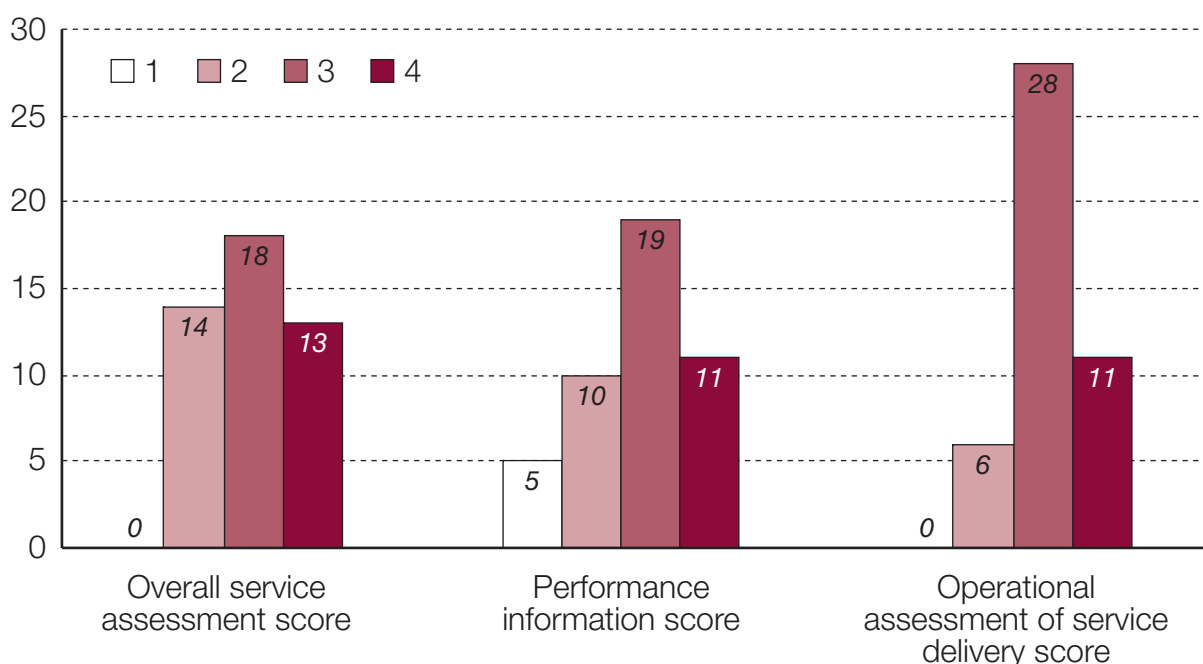
# 5

## Service assessment

- 49** The fire and rescue service assessment is made up of two elements: the operational assessment of service delivery; and an analysis of performance information. The operational assessment focuses on how well a fire service plans to respond to emergencies and prevent incidents. The performance indicators measure the outcomes from the fire services' work in responding to fires.
- 50** Both of these elements are scored separately on a four-point scale: 1 (inadequate), 2 (adequate), 3 (performing well), 4 (performing strongly). These are then combined to give the overall service assessment score. Two fire services, Kent and Medway and Merseyside, did not have a service assessment. Their excellent CPA category reduced the requirement for external assessment as reliance could be placed on their strong performance as a service.
- 51** This is the first year that a fire and rescue service assessment has been produced. The fire service is an important service provided by county councils that have fire and rescue responsibilities. For these county councils this score has also been used in their CPA score for 2006.
- 52** All services are performing above or at minimum requirements for service assessment overall. Thirteen (29 per cent) of those services are performing strongly, two of which are county fire authorities. Eighteen services (40 per cent) are performing well. Fourteen services (31 per cent) are performing adequately.
- 53** Fire services that perform well in the service assessment share a number of characteristics. They have:
- good performance management and use information on service delivery to manage and improve the service;
  - an integrated approach to identifying and analysing risks;
  - determined the resources required to deliver an effective intervention service for all incidents identified in the IRMP;
  - effective strategies and approaches to meet their statutory duty to promote fire safety; and
  - ensured that staff at all levels are trained and developed to national standards, are able to apply the command and control systems and use the equipment that is available.

**Figure 3**

All fire services are performing above or at minimum requirements for operational response



Source: Audit Commission

## Operational assessment

54 The operational assessment of service delivery forms part of the overall service assessment. It provides a judgement on how well fire services are preparing to respond to emergency incidents. The assessment was undertaken by the fire inspectorate (part of the Department for Communities and Local Government) for the Audit Commission and covered:

- risk assessment;
- prevention and protection;
- operational preparedness;
- call management and incident support; and
- emergency response.

- 55 Services were scored on a four-point scale from 1 (inadequate performance) to 4 (performing strongly).
- 56 The assessment also looked at how well services prepared for, and responded to, emergencies. Six fire services (13 per cent) were assessed as providing an adequate service overall. Twenty-eight (62 per cent) were assessed as performing well and eleven (25 per cent) as performing strongly. The Isle of Wight is the only service to score as inadequate in preparation and response to emergencies. Overall, fire services tend to perform less well in emergency response than protection and prevention.
- 57 In preparing and planning for emergencies, the health and safety of firefighters is a clear priority for the service. Firefighter training is becoming more risk based, but training for retained duty staff (volunteer firefighters) and staff above watch manager is less consistent. Effective debriefing following calls to emergencies takes place in all services, but some services are not acting on the lessons they learn. Handling emergency calls is consistently effective across all the services.

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### Case study 4 – West Yorkshire

#### Improving emergency response through training and debriefing

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service has effective arrangements for debriefing after incidents. These are enhanced by the routine use of closed circuit television (CCTV) evidence. Known by staff as the ‘silent witness’, CCTV was introduced to monitor driving and attacks on firefighters. However, it is now used across the service to debrief both incidents and exercises. Its use has brought tangible benefits when assessing operational performance, firefighter learning and development, and sharing best practice. It has become a valuable tool to address poor performance and highlight good service delivery for all operational staff.

The service has a highly developed and sophisticated approach to the training and development of tactical managers involved in critical incident command. They use an Incident Command Training suite for total immersion training where participants experience the demands of critical incident command in a number of realistic scenarios. The results of this training are being shared with other fire services and with partners. This approach fosters and develops improved working relationships and synergy between partners. It also delivers an enhanced understanding of the role of others at emergencies, incident management systems and operating practices.

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- 58 The areas of risk analysis and prevention and protection from fires are universally well managed across all services. Services have developed a wide range of approaches to improving community fire safety and increasingly to reducing road accidents.
- 59 Most services (85 per cent) perform well at assessing the risk to the local communities and prevention and protection activities. These aspects were assessed in Fire and Rescue CPA. Performance has improved in these areas since our last assessments in 2005. County council fire authorities tend to perform comparatively worse in these areas.

## Performance information

- 60 The performance information element of the service assessment score brings together a range of current performance indicators. The performance indicators were selected from those nationally available to assess the outcome of the services delivered. They included measures of outcomes, rather than inputs or processes, including:
- the number of primary fires;
  - deaths and injuries resulting from fires; and
  - the number of deliberate fires.
- 61 Performance indicators were adjusted for deprivation where there was a clear link between local deprivation and performance (for example, fires occurring in high occupancy deprived neighbourhoods).
- 62 In this element of the assessment, 40 of the 45 services assessed performed at or above minimum requirements. Five fire services (11 per cent) performed below minimum requirements in this assessment – these are Buckinghamshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Royal Berkshire and Surrey. Three services had their overall performance indicator score held at adequate performance due to the number of fire deaths. These were Cleveland, Humberside and South Yorkshire.
- 63 The majority of FRAs are on track to meet the national target to reduce accidental fire deaths by 2010. However, seven services are not on track at the moment. These are Cleveland, Greater Manchester, Humberside, Lancashire, London, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. All fire services are on target to reduce the number of deliberate primary (house) fires.

# 6

## Future assessments

### Performance assessment

- 64 In July 2007 the Audit Commission will publish the fire and rescue performance assessment framework for 2007 onwards. Fire services that can demonstrate significant and sustained improvement will be given the opportunity to have their CPA score re-categorised via a corporate assessment. A corporate assessment will also be carried out in those authorities whose performance is judged to be deteriorating significantly.

### Comprehensive Area Assessment

- 65 The Local Government White Paper and the subsequent Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill set out a new performance framework for local services, including fire and rescue services. The new performance framework replaces CPA with a Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). CAA will focus on outcomes for local people rather than only on the individual bodies responsible for local services. It will assess how well those bodies work in partnership to deliver a reduced set of national targets and local priorities. The new CAA framework will be in place from April 2009, covering all local public services.
- 66 In the meantime, it is important that a focus remains on continuing to improve fire services. We will seek to ensure that Fire CPA continues to support this improvement in fire and rescue services in the period leading up to the implementation of CAA.

# Appendix 1

## Summary of assessment scores

This table displays the 2006 direction of travel, use of resources and service assessment scores alongside the 2005 Fire and Rescue CPA score. The information is a summary of that provided on each FRA's scorecard on the Fire and Rescue CPA website:

[www.audit-commission.gov.uk/fire](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/fire).

The table groups FRAs together by their direction of travel (improving strongly, improving well, improving adequately, not improving adequately) and then lists their 2005 CPA category (excellent, good, fair, weak, poor). The table also contains the individual scores for use of resources and service assessments.

Each score is on a scale from 1 to 4, where 4 is the highest score and 1 the lowest score.

Fire service	Use of resources score 2006							Service assessment score 2006			
	Direction of travel score 2006	Fire CPA score 2005	Overall UoR score	Financial reporting	Financial management	Financial standing	Internal control	Value for money	Overall service assessment score	Performance indicators	Operational assessment of service delivery
West Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority	Improving strongly	Good	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	2	4
Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority	Improving well	Excellent	4	4	3	4	3	3	N/App	N/App	N/App
Merseyside Medway Fire and Rescue Authority	Improving well	Excellent	4	3	4	4	3	3	N/App	N/App	N/App
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire Authority	Improving well	Good	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority	Improving well	Good	4	3	3	4	4	3	2	1	4
Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority	Improving well	Good	3	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	4
Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority	Improving well	Good	3	3	3	3	2	3	4	4	3
Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Combined Fire Authority	Improving well	Good	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3
London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority	Improving well	Good	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	4
Norfolk Fire Authority	Improving well	Good	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	Improving well	Good	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	1	4
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority	Improving well	Good	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3
West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority	Improving well	Good	3	4	2	3	2	3	3	3	3
Cleveland Fire Authority	Improving well	Fair	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	2	4
County Durham & Darlington Fire Authority	Improving well	Fair	3	3	3	3	2	2	4	4	3
Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority	Improving well	Fair	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	4	2



Fire service	Use of resources score 2006						Service assessment score 2006				
	Direction of travel score 2006	Fire CPA score 2005	Overall UoR score	Financial reporting	Financial management	Financial standing	Internal control	Value for money	Overall service assessment score	Performance indicators	Operational assessment of service delivery
Essex Fire Authority	Improving well	Fair	3	3	3	3	2	2	4	3	4
Hertfordshire Fire Authority	Improving well	Fair	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Lancashire Fire Authority	Improving well	Fair	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	4
Northumberland Fire and Rescue Authority	Improving well	Fair	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3
Tyne and Wear Fire and Civil Defence Authority	Improving well	Fair	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	3
Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority	Improving well	Weak	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	3
South Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority	Improving well	Weak	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3
Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Authority	Improving adequately	Good	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Surrey Fire Authority	Improving adequately	Good	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	3
Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Authority	Improving adequately	Good	3	3	4	3	3	2	2	2	2
Cornwall Fire and Rescue Authority	Improving adequately	Fair	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2
Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service	Improving adequately	Fair	3	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	3
Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Authority	Improving adequately	Fair	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Nottinghamshire & City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority	Improving adequately	Fair	2	2	2	3	2	3	4	4	3
Suffolk Fire Authority	Improving adequately	Fair	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	4	2
Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority	Improving adequately	Weak	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3

Fire service	Use of resources score 2006						Service assessment score 2006				
	Direction of travel score 2006	Fire CPA score 2005	Overall UoR score	Financial reporting	Financial management	Financial standing	Internal control	Value for money	Overall service assessment score	Performance indicators	Operational assessment of service delivery
Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Authority	Improving adequately	Poor	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3
Avon Fire Authority	Under review	Fair	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	3
Bedfordshire and Luton Fire Authority	Under review	Weak	2	3	2	3	2	2	4	4	3
Cheshire Fire Authority	Under review	Good	3	2	2	3	3	3	4	3	4
Devon Fire and Rescue Authority	Under review	Good	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
Dorset Fire Authority	Under review	Good	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4
East Sussex Fire Authority	Under review	Fair	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
Humberside Fire Authority	Under review	Fair	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	3
Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority	Under review	Poor	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	2
Northamptonshire Fire Authority	Under review	Weak	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority	Under review	Good	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4
Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority	Under review	Good	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Somerset Fire Authority	Under review	Fair	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3
Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority	Under review	Good	Under review	Under review	Under review	Under review	Under review	Under review	4	4	3
West Sussex Fire and Rescue Authority	Under review	Fair	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

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- 1 Provisional figures for 2005, *Fire Statistics Monitor No 3/06*, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006.
- 2 *Fire and Rescue National Framework 2006-08*, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006.
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