

London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority

Organisational Assessment

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of local public services

London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority

Overall, London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority performs well

Managing performance	3 out of 4
Use of resources	3 out of 4
Managing finances	2 out of 4
Governing the business	3 out of 4
Managing resources	3 out of 4

Description of scores:

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements, Performs Poorly
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements, Performs Adequately
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Well
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Excellently

Summary

The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority performs well. The Fire Authority has a good understanding of the fire risks faced by local communities across London. This means that the Fire Authority can target prevention and protection work effectively. It is raising public awareness about fire risk and works well in partnership.

The Fire Authority responds well to emergencies. It is improving its attendance times to fire emergencies.

The Fire Authority has the right skills in place to improve. Its operational training and development programmes are excellent. They are reviewed regularly to help the Fire Authority make sure that they provide the right level of skill for operational crew.

The Fire Authority has strong financial leadership. It provides value for money in a number of ways, such as how it buys services and goods, how it manages staff and better use of its buildings. It has also achieved savings through buying with partners. Financial management is good. The Fire Authority has achieved its budget savings and exceeded its efficiency savings target for 2008/09.

Costs of some parts of the service are higher than those in other Fire Authorities. The reasons for these higher costs are understood. The Fire Authority is very good at managing its performance. It is able to show how resources are used to deliver improved performance. Protection and

prevention activity help to improve fire safety, for example, in reducing the number of home fires. The Fire Authority targets its work on areas where it can have the biggest impact. This includes fire community safety work with vulnerable older people and fire prevention work with children young people.

The Fire Authority is preparing well for the future. It has reviewed its plans for responding to emergencies and continues to improve the way it runs its services.

About London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority

The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority covers the 32 London boroughs and the City of London.

London has some of the poorest areas in England and some of the worst housing, homelessness and public health in the UK. Nine of the most deprived local authorities in the country are London boroughs.

The Fire Authority has 17 members. Eight are nominated from the London Assembly, seven from the London boroughs and two are Mayoral appointees. The current political composition of the Fire Authority is seven Conservative members, five Labour members, two Liberal Democrat members, two Mayoral appointees and one Green party member.

The Fire Authority must take account of the Mayoral strategies and priorities in carrying out its functions. The priorities the Mayor has set for the Fire Authority are to maintain front line services, and promote equality in the workforce.

The Authority's overall vision is - " To be a world class fire and rescue service for London, Londoners and visitors." The vision is set out in the Authority's Corporate Plan 2008-2011. The Authority has six main aims to achieve its vision.

These are:

- prevention - engaging with London's communities to inform and educate people in how to reduce the risk of fires and other emergencies.
- protection - influencing and regulating the built environment to protect people and property and the environment from harm.
- response - planning and preparing for emergencies that may happen, and making a high quality effective and resilient response to them.
- resources - managing risk by using our resources flexibly, efficiently and effectively, continuously improving the way we use public money.
- people - working together to deliver the highest quality services within a safe and positive environment for everyone in the organisation.

- principles - operating in accordance with our values, and ensuring that safety, sustainability, partnership and diversity run through all our activities.

Each aim includes a number of improvement priorities, against which the Fire Authority measures its performance.

Organisational assessment

Prevention

The Fire Authority works hard to reduce the risk of fires among its communities. The number of accidental fires in houses and the number of all serious fires (in houses and business premises) have reduced steadily over the last three years. The number of deliberate serious fires has reduced over the last year.

The Fire Authority uses information well to target local fire prevention work. It identifies where the most vulnerable groups of people are within communities. This means that it targets prevention work to a local area level. Fire station staff spend over 10 per cent of their time on community safety activity. In 2007/08, the Fire Authority carried out 44,620 home fire safety visits (HFSVs). This is a 21 per cent increase on the number carried out in 2006/07. It increased the number of HFSVs in 2008/09 to more than 48,700. The Fire Authority has set a challenging target for 2009/10 of 60,000 visits.

The Fire Authority's prevention work targets vulnerable older people. Its specialist team carries out home fire safety visits where a specialist fire alarm is required, for example, for hard of hearing or visually impaired people. It aims to provide 3,200 of the special home fire visits a year.

The Fire Authority works well in partnership. It is working closely with councils, police, health services and other partners across the 32 London boroughs and the City of London Corporation to tackle community safety issues. One example is the work of the Fire Authority's Arson Task Force. With its partners, the work of the Task Force has contributed to a reduction in arson across London from 20,800 incidents in 2004/05 to 12,429 incidents in 2008/09.

The Fire Authority has very good prevention projects that focus on children and young people. One of these is the Local Intervention Fire Education (LIFE) programme, which aims to help young people think about the impact of anti-social behaviour on other people. It teaches young people how to work in a team and helps them to communicate more effectively. To date, over 1,000 young people aged between 13 and 19 have completed the LIFE programme. As a result of this work there has been a reduction in the number of smaller fires, from 21,430 in 2006/07 to 18,893 in 2007/08. This is an important fire safety prevention achievement. The Fire Authority attends more numbers of smaller fires, which are over 55 per cent of all fires and 15 per cent of all incidents.

Protection

The Fire Authority is raising public awareness about fire risk. Injuries from fire

fell in 2008/09 compared with the previous year. The number of deaths from serious and accidental fires reduced in 2008/09 from the previous year. The Fire Authority is on track to achieve its own target to reduce fire deaths by 20 per cent by 2010. Fire injuries from serious fires reduced in 2008/09 compared with 2007/08.

The Fire Authority provides excellent advice on how to increase fire safety in new buildings. It uses people with these skills well to make sure there is effective fire safety in large and complex buildings, such as Heathrow Terminal 5, Wembley Arena, the 2012 Olympic Park, Cross-Rail and White City developments.

The Fire Authority is good at making sure business properties take account of fire safety issues. There are more than a 250,000 commercial and business properties in London. The Fire Authority regularly identifies new buildings and ones that have not been inspected. It has increased the number of inspections carried out over the last three years. The Fire Authority has successfully taken several business owners to court whose properties are not safe for members of the public.

Response

The Fire Authority provides a good emergency response. For 2008/09, the Fire Authority simplified the way it measures the time taken for fire crews to get to an emergency. In 2008/09, a first fire engine arrived in less than six minutes, and the second in less than seven minutes. This compares well to 2007/08. The Fire Authority's control centre answers almost 90 per cent of 999 emergency calls within seven seconds.

The number of call-outs that are not real incidents is reducing. This means that the Fire Authority attends fewer false emergencies. As a result more time is spent on crew training and on community safety work. It also helps to reduce costs. Almost half (47 per cent) of the calls that the Fire Authority responds to are false alarms, including hoax calls. This represents a substantial amount of firefighter crew time.

The largest number of false alarms calls that the Fire Authority attends are due to automatic fire alarms in business properties. In 2008/09, the number of these calls increased slightly. Since 2004/05 the Fire Authority has challenged callers they suspect may not be reporting a genuine emergency. There has been a 62 per cent reduction in hoax calls since then. In 2007/08, the Fire Authority attended 12 per cent fewer hoax calls than in the previous year. This number reduced further in 2008/09.

The Fire Authority works very well with London's local councils, police and other public services to deal with road traffic accidents and respond to emergencies. It plans for emergencies well. To test how well it would respond to emergencies it carries out regular joint exercises. The Fire Authority has a major role in London-wide safety planning and operations. It manages the London Local Authority Co-ordination Centre, which allows London's 33 authorities to act together if there is an emergency incident that requires a cross-London response. It provides 24-hour support in case there are London-wide emergencies. It leads annual training and exercises to test how well public services could respond to this type of emergency.

The Fire Authority has set up a Special Operations Group to manage its response to the special issues arising from terrorist threats. The group manages the 47 projects of the Fire Authority's specific London Resilience Programme. The Fire Authority is good at making sure that it can continue to provide a service when its resources are most stretched.

Resources

The Fire Authority delivers good value for money. It makes good use of its resources and makes a good level of savings. Although costs per head of population are high, the Fire Authority had the second lowest increase in costs per head between 2007/08 and 2008/09. Band D council tax is the second lowest for a metropolitan Fire Authority. Although it is the largest Fire Authority in the country, it is comparatively one of the cheapest.

The Fire Authority has strong financial leadership. Financial management is good and financial reporting is improving. It made more efficiency savings than originally planned this year. This includes efficiency savings from improving the way the service is organised. It has enhanced its understanding of its costs in 2008/09, and further initiatives are in place in 2009/10. Financial planning is sound.

How the Fire Authority buys services and goods has helped it make very good levels of efficiency savings. It has made savings through contracts for protective and operational equipment, catering at fire stations and clothing. It is saving 30 per cent on market prices through a three-year energy contract. It is also saving money by buying services and goods with partners. The Fire Authority is using technology well to make efficiency savings. For example, it has changed a number of processes to electronic systems, including staff expenses and recruitment.

Good use is made of technology to plan services, including how best to target resources to have the biggest impact. Doing this means that the best use can be made of firefighters and staff across the organisation. It also means that the Fire Authority focuses its work in the community to have maximum impact. It has made good use of technology in recruitment campaigns, including initial savings of £500k and estimated annual savings of £300k through its e-recruitment systems.

Workforce planning is strong with overall an excellent focus on equalities and diversity. The Fire Authority knows what staff it needs for the future. It is planning well to make sure it has the right staff through development and training and targeted recruitment campaigns.

The Fire Authority has made good efficiency savings from improving the way it is organised. For example, it has reduced its human resources staff while providing the same level of service. It has reorganised how it manages service delivery. This has led to the better use of fire-fighters. The Fire Authority delivers good services despite keeping increases in income low compared to other fire authorities.

There has been a great improvement in the way it monitors sickness among its staff. This means that it can more easily identify staff who may need

support and help. It has led to more staff being available for work which has meant savings in time and money. It has reduced the number of ill-health retirements from 162 in 2002 to 1 in 2008/09. This has made savings of more than £5.7m over four years.

The Fire Authority is very good at managing its performance. It has strong and effective ways of knowing how it performs. This includes how it is performing with its partners. It makes use of up-to-date, reliable information which shows how well it is doing against its plans and how much it is spending. Information is clear and provided to the right people. The Fire Authority takes prompt and suitable action when performance starts to go off track.

There is a strong focus on improvement. Although performing well overall, it looks at ways of improving further. It is strengthening how it sets targets; it is building on its approach to consultation; and is developing a more consistent approach to securing value for money. The Fire Authority is putting in place several changes to business processes including transferring fire safety case files into electronic form. These changes are being put in place as part of a planned approach to improving efficiency which includes a change to more mobile working.

People

Training is excellent. The Fire Authority's operational training, development and assessment programmes help to provide the right skills for fire-fighters. There is regular and thorough review of what training is provided. The Fire Authority uses review to develop better ways of working.

There are good management development programmes. In 2006 and 2007, the Fire Authority began two management development and graduate trainee programmes. The programmes have given the Fire Authority increased skills at management level at the same time as increasing the diversity of its workforce. For example, 41 per cent of the management trainees were women, and 29 per cent from black and ethnic minority communities; and 42 per cent of graduate trainees were women and 7 per cent from black and ethnic minority communities.

The Fire Authority has a diverse workforce but has yet to meet national targets for women. It works hard to attract people from across the wide range of communities it serves and is successful in doing so. In 2008, the Fire Authority had 638 black and ethnic minority (10.7 per cent) and 225 women operational staff (3.8 per cent). In January 2009, the Authority employed 13.25 per cent people from black and ethnic minority communities and 7.55 per cent 'other white' staff. The number of fire-fighters with a disability is also increasing year on year but the number of non-uniformed staff with a disability has reduced. It has achieved Level 5 of the Equalities Standard - this is the highest level of the national standard that shows an organisation is effective in providing opportunities for all groups of people.

The Fire Authority is strongly committed to the welfare and safety of its staff. It has good health and safety practices. Its well-being and sickness programmes have helped to reduce sickness absence. In 2005, absence due to stress, anxiety and depression represented 20 per cent of the Fire Authority's total sickness absence. This is now 13 per cent. The total sickness absence for all staff has reduced by 30 per cent over the last three years. However, although sickness absence for fire-fighters continues to fall, there

was a slight increase in sickness absence for non-uniformed staff in 2008/09. The number of accidents and injuries to fire-fighters reduced from 230 in 2007/08 to 205 in 2008/09.

Principles

The Fire Authority is reducing its impact on the environment. It is reducing energy use in its buildings. It reduced CO2 emissions by 3.75 per cent in 2008/09 compared with the previous year, and has reduced emissions by 17 per cent compared to 1990 levels. This is one of the Mayor's targets. It has developed an improved pumping and foam system, which contributes to reducing impact on the environment and is less costly than previous models. It has set up a sustainable development team to develop its work on sustainable development, including climate change and responsible procurement.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

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