

PRESS RELEASE

STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 am Thursday 20th June 2019

PR 20062019

20 June 2019

‘Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service is OUTSTANDING at preventing fires’

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has been recognised for its innovative and targeted prevention work and its response to UK wide national incidents.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) has performed strongly in a detailed inspection carried out by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) which considered:

- How effective they are in keeping people safe from fire and other risks
- How efficient they are in keeping people safe from fire and other risks
- How well they look after their people

MFRS’s Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigan has expressed his delight that the Service has been assessed as ‘Good’ across all three themes, whilst also scoring a currently unprecedented ‘Outstanding’ judgement in two of the 11 sub-themes for its work to prevent fires & other risks, and its ability to respond to national incidents.

All English fire and rescue services will have been inspected by the end of the Summer and Merseyside FRS was part of the second group of inspections that took place late in 2019, with inspectors spending several days exploring areas across operational and support functions, interviewing staff and visiting Fire Stations.

The inspection found that in a 12-month period, MFRS carried out 37.1 Home Fire Safety Checks per 1000 population, many more than the England average of 10.4. The Service attended 16,503 incidents, with 46% of those being fires, 21% non-fire incidents and 33% false alarms.

The report concluded that the service understands risks in its local community and exceeds its own target of attending all life risk incidents within 10 minutes on 90% of occasions (actually 92.3%) with an average response to primary fires of just 7 minutes and 29 seconds.

Communications Manager: Andrew Highton 0151 296 4417 Mob: 07841871323

Andrew.Highton@merseyfire.gov.uk

Corporate Communications, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, Bridle Road, Bootle, Merseyside L30 4YD.

Inspectors also found that the work undertaken to prevent fires has resulted in the lowest number of fire deaths on record.

Based on robust research, the service directs prevention activity to people most at risk from fire and other emergencies, wherever they are. The service equips and trains its firefighters well, shows innovation in making more fire engines available at times of higher demand and maximises the time firefighters are available to carry out prevention and protection activities.

Inspectors found that the service has made excellent provisions to ensure staff have access to a broad range of wellbeing initiatives including mental health first aid, voluntary health screening and swift access to medical support. Staff reported positive personal experiences of the range of wellbeing support available. The service was judged as 'requires improvement' in only one area, related to fairness and promoting diversity, the Chief Fire Officer and his senior team have already responded to this finding and are exploring opportunities to secure improvements in the future.

To do so they will also build on the significantly positive aspects of the Inspectors' report in relation to diversity and inclusion which has resulted in its most recent firefighter recruitment campaign attracting 26% female candidates and 7% from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) background.

Inspectors saw strong evidence of effective partnership working with Merseyside Police and Local Authorities contributing to the successful prosecution of many arsonists. The report praises the effective partnership and multi-agency work carried out by the Service, including active membership of the Merseyside Road Safety Partnership and also found the Service to be proactive when engaging with under-represented groups in the community.

The report states that 'the service has developed a good culture of learning and improvement' with training programmes demonstrating 'the right mix of knowledge and practical skills to keep the public safe when responding to emergency incidents'.

In terms of fire regulation, the Service is targeting premises based on risk, has restructured its protection department and is proposing increasing resources to assist with the delivery of the risk-based inspection plan. Enforcement action is taken where necessary and in conjunction with partner organisations. The Service works hard to reduce the negative impact of false alarms by working with businesses to prevent them.

Inspectors found that the Service has site and risk-specific and multi-agency plans in place for high risk premises and high profile events where there is the potential for major hazards to develop. The Service is highly effective at working with other fire services nationally and is highly effective in the management and coordination of national resilience assets via its Fire Control.

The Service is good at managing its budget and has made significant savings over the last seven years- budget has reduced from £73.6m in 2010/11 to £59.9m in 2018/19 - it has a good plan to use reserve funds to ease financial pressure and has changed shift patterns in

Communications Manager: Andrew Highton 0151 296 4417 Mob: 07841871323

Andrew.Highton@merseyfire.gov.uk

Corporate Communications, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, Bridle Road, Bootle, Merseyside L30 4YD.

response to operational demand to maximise the productivity of firefighters' work. The Service 'has made a consistent commitment to ensuring it provides services in a productive manner. The changes it has introduced are for the benefit of the public.'

The full inspection report and those of the other fire & rescue services inspected so far are available on the HMICFRS website www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/fire-and-rescue-services/

Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigan, said:

'This is an excellent result and I am very pleased that Her Majesty's Inspectorate saw the same dedication and professionalism I see every day in our people; irrespective of the role they fulfil they go above and beyond to protect our communities. I am immensely proud of each and every one of them, they are highly professional, totally committed and incredibly compassionate, they are a credit to our Service and to Merseyside.

The people of Merseyside should remember that no matter who they are, we are always there for them when things are at their worst. It gives me great satisfaction to know that our continued efforts have been recognised and we are genuinely making our communities safer - we intend to build on this report and continue to find innovative ways to keep our communities safe, whilst developing and enhancing the skills of our dedicated staff to ensure they thrive in work.'

I genuinely believe we are the best fire and rescue service in the UK and I can assure the public and our staff that we are only going to get better.'

Chair of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority, Councillor Les Byrom, said:

'The outcomes of this report are fantastic news for the Authority, and a testament to our support of the Chief Fire Officer's recent bold and innovative plans to make positive changes to enhance the Service and increase resources despite years of budget cuts. The news that we are the first to be graded as outstanding in how we prevent fires and respond to national risks is particularly welcome.

This is a great time to be a part of the Authority as we move forward into a dynamic and optimistic future for Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service. I would like to salute all of the dedicated operational and support staff who work hard every day to make it a service to be proud of.'

For free fire safety advice or to request a home fire safety check, call 0800 731 5958.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service also provides free smoke alarms for Merseyside residents aged 65 or over or those referred by partner agencies.

ENDS

NOTES:

1. The HMICFRS was formerly the HMIC (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary) but since July 2017 has also been responsible for inspecting the 45 fire and rescue services of England and Wales, taking over the responsibilities of Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate. This is the first independent inspection of fire and rescue services for 12 years.
2. As outlined in the HMICFRS report, the 'expected' judgement across all categories is 'good'. If a service exceeds this, it is judged as 'outstanding', while if shortcomings are revealed, the judgement is 'requires improvement'. If serious failings of policy, practice or performance are found, this is judged as 'inadequate'.