

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Director of Legal & Governance, Graham Britten
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Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
Louise Harrison

To: Members of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority

1 December 2025

Dear Councillor

MEMBERS OF THE
PRESS AND PUBLIC

Please note the content of Page
2 of this Agenda Pack

To contact our Communication
Team, please email

cteam@bucksfire.gov.uk

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY** to be held at **THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, THE GATEWAY OFFICES, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY, BUCKS, HP19 8FF** on **10 DECEMBER 2025** at **2PM** when the business set out overleaf will be transacted.

Yours faithfully

Graham Britten
Director of Legal and Governance

Health and Safety:

There will be limited facilities for members of the public to observe the meeting in person. A recording of the meeting will be available after the meeting.

Chairman: Councillor Monger

Councillors: Adoh, Bailey, Banks, Carroll, Exon, Gomm, Hall, M Hussain OBE, N Hussain, Lancaster, McLean, Priestley, Rouse, Sherwell, Stuchbury and Wilson



MAKING YOU SAFER

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To observe the meeting as a member of the Press and Public

The Authority supports the principles of openness and transparency. To enable members of the press and public to see or hear the meeting this meeting will be recorded. Please visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWmIXPWAscxpL3vIiv7bh1Q>

The Authority also allows the use of social networking websites and blogging to communicate with people about what is happening, as it happens.

Adjournment and Rights to Speak – Public

The Authority may adjourn a Meeting to hear a member of the public on a particular agenda item. The proposal to adjourn must be moved by a Member, seconded and agreed by a majority of the Members present and voting.

A request to speak on a specified agenda item should be submitted by email to gbritten@bucksfire.gov.uk by 4pm on the Monday prior to the meeting. Please state if you would like the Director of Legal and Governance to read out the statement on your behalf, or if you would like to be sent a 'teams' meeting invitation to join the meeting at the specified agenda item.

If the meeting is then adjourned, prior to inviting a member of the public to speak, the Chairman should advise that they:

- (a) speak for no more than four minutes,
- (b) should only speak once unless the Chairman agrees otherwise.

The Chairman should resume the Meeting as soon as possible, with the agreement of the other Members present. Adjournments do not form part of the Meeting.

Rights to Speak - Members

A Member of the constituent Councils who is not a Member of the Authority may attend Meetings of the Authority or its Committees to make a statement on behalf of the Member's constituents in the case of any item under discussion which directly affects the Member's division, with the prior consent of the Chairman of the Meeting which will not be unreasonably withheld. The Member's statement will not last longer than four minutes. Such attendance will be facilitated if requests are made to enquiries@bucksfire.gov.uk at least two clear working days before the meeting. Statements can be read out on behalf of the Member by the Director of Legal and Governance, or the Member may request a 'team's meeting invitation to join the meeting at the specified agenda item.

Petitions

Any Member of the constituent Councils, a District Council, or Parish Council, falling within the Fire Authority area may Petition the Fire Authority.

The substance of a petition presented at a Meeting of the Authority shall be summarised, in not more than four minutes, by the Member of the Council who presents it (as above). If the petition does not refer to a matter before the Authority, it shall be referred without debate to the appropriate Committee.

Questions

Members of the Authority, or its constituent councils, District, or Parish Councils may submit written questions prior to the Meeting to allow their full and proper consideration. Such questions shall be received by the Monitoring Officer to the Authority, *in writing*, at least two clear working days before the day of the Meeting of the Authority or the Committee.

COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY - TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To appoint the Authority's Standing Committees and Lead Members.
2. To determine the following issues after considering recommendations from the Executive Committee, or in the case of 2(a) below, only, after considering recommendations from the Overview and Audit Committee:
 - (a) variations to Standing Orders and Financial Regulations;
 - (b) the medium-term financial plans including:
 - (i) the Revenue Budget;
 - (ii) the Capital Programme;
 - (iii) the level of borrowing under the Local Government Act 2003 in accordance with the Prudential Code produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy; and
 - (c) a Precept and all decisions legally required to set a balanced budget each financial year;
 - (d) the Prudential Indicators in accordance with the Prudential Code;
 - (e) the Treasury Strategy;
 - (f) the Scheme of Members' Allowances;
 - (g) the Integrated Risk Management Plan and Action Plan;
 - (h) the Annual Report.
 - (i) the Capital Strategy
3. To determine the Code of Conduct for Members on recommendation from the Overview and Audit Committee.
4. To determine all other matters reserved by law or otherwise, whether delegated to a committee or not.
5. To determine the terms of appointment or dismissal of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, and deputy to the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, or equivalent.
6. To approve the Authority's statutory pay policy statement.

AGENDA

Item No:

1. Apologies

2. Minutes

To approve, and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 8 October 2025. **(Pages 7 - 22)**

(a) Minutes

To approve, and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Fire Authority held on 8 October 2025. **(Pages 23 - 36)**

(b) Minutes

To approve, and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Fire Authority held on 16 October 2025. **(Pages 37 - 52)**

3. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

The Chairman to invite officers to provide verbal updates on any actions noted in the Minutes from the previous meeting.

4. Disclosure of Interests

Members to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in any matter being considered which are not entered onto the Authority's Register, and officers to disclose any interests they may have in any contract to be considered.

5. Chairman's Announcements

To receive the Chairman's announcements (if any).

6. Petitions

To receive petitions under Standing Order SOA6.

7. Questions

To receive questions in accordance with Standing Order SOA7.

8. Recommendations from Committees:

Executive Committee – 12 November 2025

Performance Management – Q2 2025/26

"That the report and recommendation below be approved for submission to the Fire Authority –

1 – It is recommended that the Performance Management – Q2 2025/2026 be noted."

The report considered by the Executive Committee is attached at item 8. **(Pages 53 - 100)**

9. Standing Orders Relating to Contracts

To consider item 9 (Pages 101 - 128)

10. Health and Safety Annual Report 2024-25

To consider item 10. (Pages 129 - 146)

11. Protection Assurance Report

To consider item 11. (Pages 147 - 186)

12. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) - Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023-2025 Update

To consider item 12. (Pages 187 - 276)

13. Date of Next Meeting

To note that the next meeting of the Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 11 February 2026 at 11 am in the Paralympic Room, Buckinghamshire Council, Gateway Offices, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 8FF.

If you have any enquiries about this agenda please contact: Katie Nellist (Democratic Services Officer) – Tel: (01296) 744633 email: knellist@bucksfire.gov.uk



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY

ROLE DESCRIPTION

LEAD MEMBERS

1. To take a lead role in providing support and constructive challenge to senior officers in the development of strategies and plans and contributing towards the strategic direction of the Authority, within the Authority's overall policy objectives.
2. To act as a 'sounding board' for senior officers on issues within the portfolio, and be supportive in dealing with any problems at a strategic level.
3. To review, in conjunction with senior officers, the service within the portfolio.
4. To keep abreast of related developments and policies at national, regional and local level.
5. To take the lead in reporting to the Authority, one of its committees, or panels on issues within the portfolio.
6. To attend the Overview and Audit Committee, at its request, in connection with any issues associated with the portfolio which is the subject of scrutiny.
7. To act as a spokesperson for the Authority on issues within the portfolio.
8. To represent the Authority on bodies, at events and at conferences related to the portfolio, as appointed by the Executive Committee and to feedback to the Authority any issues of relevance / importance.

(Approved 8 June 2007)



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 OCTOBER 2025 AT 2 PM.

Present: Councillors Adoh, Bailey (Vice Chairman), Banks, Carroll, Exon, Hall, N Hussain, Lancaster, McLean, Monger (Chairman), Priestley, Rouse, Sherwell, Stuchbury and Wilson

Officers: L Harrison (Chief Fire Officer), S Tuffley (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), D Buchanan (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), A Carter (Head of Service Improvement), R Davidson (Director of People), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), A Collett (Head of People Services), P Scanes (Head of Response and Resilience) A Burch (Head of Prevention and Protection), C Newman (Data Intelligence Team Manager), and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillors Gomm and M Hussain OBE

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that although members of the public were able to attend and observe in person, following the meeting, a video recording would be uploaded to the Authority's YouTube Channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/@BucksFireRescue/videos>

FA16 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 11 June 2025, be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

FA17 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

FA12 – HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) – BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (BFRS) 2023-2025 UPDATE - A Member asked for a briefing on the Health and Safety implications – The Director of Legal and Governance advised that the Member, who was the new Lead Member for Health and Safety and Corporate Risk had

met with himself and the Health and Safety Team and been fully briefed.

FA18 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

None.

FA19 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that –

Welcoming Our New Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices

Following a successful recruitment campaign, we are proud to welcome six new Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices who officially commenced employment on 22 September 2025. This cohort represents our ongoing commitment to ensuring we have the right people, with the right skills to deliver our service to the community.

Among the new recruits are one internal candidate from the Prevention team and two On Call employees, an encouraging reflection of our dedication to internal development and providing clear pathways for advancement.

The apprentices have begun their in-house training at Haddenham and West Ashland Fire Stations, where they will remain until Friday 10 October. From there, they will transition to the Fire Service College on Monday 13 October to continue their training programme. Over the coming months, they will undertake an intensive schedule designed to equip them with the essential skills, knowledge, and experience required to undertake their role as firefighters.

Their training journey will culminate in mid-January 2026 with a formal graduation ceremony, after which they will be deployed to their assigned stations to begin their operational careers.

We extend our warmest congratulations and best wishes to our new recruits as they embark on this exciting and challenging chapter. We look forward to seeing them grow into their roles and contribute to the safety and resilience of our communities.

As part of the State Visit by President of the United States (POTUS) Donald Trump, BFRS supported partner agencies through planning and operational phases of the visit.

Following months of planning, a contingent of staff operating across various locations supported this significant event across both days, with most of this on the second day at Chequers. Officers supported day one of the event at Windsor, supporting Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service with Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) at various locations and CBRN command capabilities in the Silver Command Suite and at Strategic level.

For day two, we continued to support in Windsor, but also had resources placed in and around Chequers, co-located with partner agencies, to respond within the area and maintain public safety. This included two pumping appliances, a National Interagency Liaison Officer (NILO), Hazardous Materials Advisor (HMA) and specialist vehicles including the water carrier from Princes Risborough and rural firefighting vehicle from Chesham.

The event was a huge success, and our support has been recognised by all involved. The Prime Minister made an announcement on the police event radio group, and a letter of thanks from the TVP Gold Commander, ACC Bunt, was also received and also extended to all involved.

My thanks to all who assisted in the planning and operational phases of this event, it would not have been possible without the work put in. Another great demonstration of teamwork and professionalism in the Service.

Rural Firefighting Vehicles

I am pleased to inform Members that the first of the new specialist rural firefighting vehicles is now in Service and following a short period of familiarisation training will be available for incident mobilisation from Chesham Fire Station. The second new vehicle is currently being fitted out with equipment and will soon be on the run at High Wycombe. This will provide an excellent level of resilience across the Service to deal with a range of incidents including wildfire and wide area flooding and will complement existing capabilities including the rural firefighting vehicle at West Ashland Fire Station.

Public Leaders Programme

I'm delighted to be able to tell Members that our Chief Fire Officer, Louise Harrison, has been invited by the Cabinet

Office and the College of Leadership in Government to join a new Public Leaders Programme. This was set to launch in January 2026. It was a 12-month leadership programme designed for senior individuals in the public sector, Chief Constables, senior civil servants, Chief Executive Officers of local government and some Chief Fire Officers. It was fully funded by the Cabinet Office, and the course involved four sessions spread across next year. This has been discussed in detail, and I am happy with the level of cover for any days when the CFO would be away. The areas to be covered were building relations and networks across the public sector; improving core skills for systems leadership at the executive level; enhancing capabilities to make principled ethical decisions aligned with public service values; improving knowledge of factors strategically shaping the UK and enhancing the capability to innovate and lead modernization in a rapidly changing world. This was a great opportunity not only for the CFO, but for the Service, because I am confident that not only will she make a significant contribution to the course, but that in turn, this Service will benefit greatly.

A Member asked to raise a point of order. The Conservative Group was concerned when receiving the agenda for this meeting that there were just two substantive items on the agenda. Given it was the responsibility of this Authority to scrutinise the work of officers, the Member could not find a previous Fire Authority meeting with so few items on the agenda. Given that the Service had an HMICFRS visit coming up, and the work underway on the training centre, there was no financial report, there was no report on the On Call Improvement Programme, and there was nothing that would normally be on the agenda of the Fire Authority. The Member asked that when discussing the December meeting, work was done to ensure there was substantive business on the agenda to properly scrutinise the work of the Authority.

The Chairman advised he would discuss this further with the Strategic Leadership Team when they prepare for future meetings.

FA20 PETITIONS

Councillor Rouse advised that this Petition was presented to stop the cuts to Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue

Service being progressed by Liberal Democrat, Labour and Impact Alliance members of the Fire Authority. As Members of the constituent authorities of Buckinghamshire Council and Milton Keynes City Council we hereby petition the Authority as follows. We note:

- That every single Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue appliance was used in the summer of 2022 to cope with significant wildfire challenges, and additional resources from other services were still required.
- That in March 2025 His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services removed all causes for concern from Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service and exited it from its "Engage" enhanced monitoring.
- On 12 February 2025, a working group of the Fire Authority Executive Committee, with a majority of Conservative members, considered proposals from officers on options to cut 8 on-call fire engines from the fleet via 2 different options across the following stations: Amersham, Aylesbury, Beaconsfield, Great Missenden, Stokenchurch, Haddenham, Buckingham, High Wycombe, Broughton and West Ashland. The closure of Great Missenden and Stokenchurch was considered in those proposals. A draft timeline to commence public consultation on 1st July was provided.
- **That Executive Committee working group provided clear guidance to Officers that such proposals would not command the support of a Conservative majority Fire Authority. That proposals be developed to look at better use of Great Missenden, Stokenchurch and Haddenham stations. That options for further investment in a wholetime pump in Princes Risborough be developed.**
- No further proposals were brought to the Fire Authority or its Committees for consideration since February.
- In July 2025, the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Lead Members and Chair of Overview and Audit - Liberal Democrat, Labour and Impact Alliance Members - were presented with a paper outlining the same 2 options of cutting 8 fire engines and closing Great Missenden and Stokenchurch stations, with a

revised timeline of commencing public consultation in November 2025.

- The paper sought Member “support to proceed to public consultation”. Following this meeting the work proceeded to staff and pre-public consultation.
- That Conservative Members of the Executive Committee were not invited.
- On 5th August 2025 Members of the Fire Authority received an email setting out the 2 options of cuts being progressed to staff and public consultation – with no explanation of rationale of the options. Members were asked to keep confidential ahead of staff being briefed. An option of no reductions was not presented.
- On the 11th August dates were placed in Fire Authority Member diaries for Extraordinary Fire Authority meetings on 12th November 2025 and 18th March 2025 with no explanation as to purpose.
- On 26th August an all staff briefing was held, placing the plans in the public domain. In the briefing, shared with members, staff were told:
 - “So we have reached or exceeded milestone 1 where we’ve presented some options to the leads members of the fire authority and sought authorization to carry on with this piece of work.”
- Pre-public consultation concluded on the 26th September.
- The Fire Authority had an under-spend of £954k in 2024/5, one of the lowest debt levels of any Fire Authority in the country and Reserves of circa £15m. Wholtime firefighter numbers have consistently been above 300 budget since 2024.
- The Fire Brigades Union oppose these proposed cuts.
- The two Conservative Members of Parliament for Mid-Buckinghamshire and Beaconsfield wrote to the Chief Fire Officer seeking a briefing on the proposed changes. A briefing was only offered 3 weeks later on 26th September and only then after they launched public petitions forcing a response from the Authority. This was also after pre-public consultation had concluded.
- That the Labour Government has imposed a housing target of nearly 100,000 on Buckinghamshire and

significant data centre and solar farm infrastructure. Milton Keynes recently had a further 40,000 homes allocated to it through the New Towns Plan.

- That Greg Smith MP, Joy Morrissey MP, Buckinghamshire Conservatives and Milton Keynes Conservatives launched petitions on the 26th September. Those petitions already have over 1000 signatures in just 10 days.
- That the Conservative Group have tabled a motion to stop the cuts progressing to public consultation - to be considered by an Extraordinary Meeting of the Fire Authority on 16th October.

We believe:

- The Chairman of the Authority has allowed a major breakdown in proper governance and scrutiny of these proposed changes, which have been progressed to staff and pre-public consultation without any consideration by the Fire Authority or its Executive Committee.
- There has been a failure by the Chairman of the Authority to properly engage community stakeholders including Members of Parliament and the Constituent Authorities.
- We believe the reason the previous Conservative majority Executive stopped these plans progressing still stands. Namely these cuts have no financial need; will significantly weaken Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service resilience to deal with major incidents; will lengthen response times in rural areas and significantly damage public confidence in the Service.
- We believe the public will oppose these cuts. The Fire Brigades Union opposes these cuts. The largest political group on the Authority opposes these cuts. The Conservative Group on the largest constituent and Conservative run authority of Buckinghamshire opposes these cuts. The Milton Keynes Council Conservative Group oppose these cuts. The Conservative Members of Parliament in Buckinghamshire oppose these cuts.

We therefore petition the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Impact Alliance members of the Fire Authority to reverse

their planned cuts with immediate effect and to commit to a thorough review of the governance failures outlined.

Petition signatories:

Cllr Simon Rouse (Conservative Group Leader, Fire Authority and former Authority Chairman)

Cllr Shade Adoh (Conservative, Buckinghamshire member of the Authority)

Cllr David Carroll (Conservative, Buckinghamshire Member of the Authority)

Cllr Phil Gomm (Conservative, Buckinghamshire Member of the Authority)

Cllr Gary Hall (Conservative, Buckinghamshire Member of the Authority)

Cllr Mahboob Hussain OBE (Conservative, Buckinghamshire Member of the Authority)

Cllr Keith Mclean (Conservative, Milton Keynes member of the Authority)

Cllr Steven Broadbent (Conservative Group Leader, Buckinghamshire Council)

Cllr Shazna Muzammil (Conservative Group Leader, Milton Keynes City Council)

FA21 QUESTIONS

The Chairman advised there had been a series of written questions submitted in advance of the meeting under SOA7. The questions and responses had been shared with Members and put on the Authority's website. Any of the questioners present, would be allowed to ask one supplementary question.

Question 5 – Councillor Rouse asked Councillor N Hussain the following supplementary question - The Conservative group is clear; it does not support these proposals to cut 8 fire engines and close 2 stations. Do you support these proposals?

Councillor N Hussain responded to Councillor Rouse - No proposals have been submitted. Members have been briefed as to what the senior team were working on under the auspices of the briefing that was set by the previous board in February and in March to set this motion forward, under the CRMP. At present, there were no formal proposals to consider.

Question 6 – Councillor Rouse asked Councillor Stuchbury the following supplementary question - The Conservative

group is clear; it does not support the reduction of 8 fire engines and closing 2 stations including in your ward Buckingham. Do you support the proposals including the removal of a fire engine from Buckingham?

Councillor Stuchbury responded to Councillor Rouse - Thank you for your question and it's very much appreciated to be able to put some clarity around it. Yes, there had been a lot of talk about proposals which had neither been agreed or taken forward. There was no proposals to agree, vote on or move forward. When proposals come forward at the appropriate time, Members would have the opportunity to agree, vote and discuss them.

Question 7 – Councillor Rouse asked Councillor Bailey the following supplementary question - thank you for the honesty of your answer, which I appreciate. The proposals to reduce 8 fire engines and close 2 fire stations are opposed by the Conservative group. Do you oppose those proposals?

Councillor Bailey responded to Councillor Rouse – I don't oppose or not oppose those proposals because they have not been worked up into full proposals yet. The only thing that I approved at the meeting in July was the option for the senior leadership team to gather further information through informal consultation.

Question 8 – Councillor Rouse asked Councillor Priestley the following supplementary question – the Conservative Group are clear that we do not support the reduction of 8 fire engines and the closure of 2 fire stations, do you support the proposals and/or if those proposals come forward, will you oppose the removal of 8 fire engines and the closure of 2 fire stations.

Councillor Priestley responded to Councillor Rouse - Thank you Councillor Rouse. I, in the same vein as my colleagues who have answered you, was at the meeting in July where there were some presentations by officers to Members of the situation at hand, the context, and what I recollect agreeing to, was moving forward to informally engage with a range of stakeholders, as it were, as regards informal consultation. From my point of view, I cannot recollect any formal proposals being put forward, so really that is what my answer would be.

Question 10 - Councillor Rouse asked Councillor N Hussain the following supplementary question – Could you just

please clarify whether before you submitted your answer to this question you checked it with officers.

Councillor N Hussain responded to Councillor Rouse - If you remember at the Executive Committee meeting, I specifically asked about Stokenchurch because a private businessman had approached me as to whether it was available to buy, rent or let. I was told that no decisions had been made, and no proposals had been made as yet.

Question 11 - Councillor Rouse asked to clarify, that subsequent to Councillor Monger's answer, and speaking to the Chief Fire Officer, it appeared that when he had declined the August Group Leader meeting, he appears to have declined all of the meetings which is why they were not in his diary, so he appreciated the Chairman confirming, otherwise he would not have known they were going on.

Question 12 - Councillor Rouse asked Councillor Wilson the following supplementary question – Thank you for the extensive reply. We are clear in the Conservative Group, and you make the point in your answer about safety, that we would not support these proposals, amongst other reasons for concerns over public safety. You will be aware that the Fire Brigades Union have also made it clear that they do not support these proposals. I am very happy for the proposals which had been in front of Lead Members and Chairman to be put in the public domain, but could you please answer for us, we will oppose these cuts of 8 fire engines and closure of 2 stations. We have spent three years having these dialogues, and that is why we are clear. On that basis and on the basis that the Fire Brigades Union also oppose it on the basis of public safety, will you oppose these cuts.

Councillor Wilson responded to Councillor Rouse – thank you for clarifying that I was not the Chair of the Overview and Audit Committee at the point of the meeting which had been alleged in various communications. As I've made clear, I think anything that comes forward needs to be put in front of the Overview and Audit Committee. I'm very keen that Member's scrutinise everything, and I have not seen anything at present and as I said at the end of my written statement, I would be very concerned of any proposal that was going to put the safety of the county at risk.

Question 13 - Councillor Rouse asked Councillor N Hussain the following supplementary question – this is a potential serious unintended consequence of the work that is underway on the reduction of 8 fire engines across Buckinghamshire, could the Lead Member confirm whether, when he says there had been no formal work, firstly again has he confirmed that with officers, and secondly, has there been informal work.

Councillor N Hussain responded to Councillor Rouse – To know what the definition of informal work is, but I stand by my written answer.

FA22 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 10 SEPTEMBER 2025

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – Q1 2025/26

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised Members that the pack being presented today was slightly different from those presented in the past. April saw the Service's new Community Risk Management Plan take effect. As such, the Service was now focused on its six new objectives and enablers. To complement this, the pack was now broken down into six sections, reflecting those objectives and enablers. The location of the highlighted measures could now be found within the cover paper as opposed to within the pack itself.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager was very aware that Members were reviewing quarter one's performance in October. This was something that was discussed during the Executive Committee meeting with the aim of improving the timeliness of Members seeing the performance data going forward.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager reassured Members that the Service reviewed its performance on a monthly basis in which over 150 metrics were recorded, scrutinised and actions made where appropriate. The quarter two performance would be presented at the Executive Committee meeting in November.

A Member asked for an update on the number of Fire Safety Audits that had been completed and had also seen there was recruitment underway for a Protection Team Leader or similar. Obviously, this was an area where a huge amount of work had been done to address the cause for concern that was removed. The Member recalled at the

time that HMICFRS's observation of the Service was that it had sufficient resources and they were suitably well trained, but what was needed was clearer performance management focus of those resources and clarity about their role. Given that the Service had HMIFRS coming back in the New Year, the Member would appreciate an update from officers on how Members could get confidence that the Service had not taken a step back on Protection, and that work was underway to get sufficient resource in place and that the Service would be back on track by the time of the HMI visit.

The Head of Prevention and Protection advised Members that the Service had been heavily scrutinised by HMI historically around performance within the protection function. It was an area that continued to be on an improvement journey. In 2023/24, there were 480 audits, in 2024/25, 610 and in 2025/26 the projection was over 700 audits this year. The Service was moving in the right direction but needed to continue to focus and ensure it attracted qualified staff into the team and develop current staff. This report focussed on quarter one, but quarter two had seen a significant improvement with an average of 60 audits taking place per month.

A Member asked if it would be possible for a specific paper to be presented to the Executive Committee meeting in November on the work of protection as it would be useful for Members to scrutinise ahead of HMI in the new year.

The Chairman of the Overview and Audit Committee advised he had a meeting with the Chairman coming up to discuss how the performance measures were brought to scrutiny, because he was very mindful of the Executive Committee marking their own homework. He felt that more time was needed to be spent in scrutiny looking through these key performance measures.

A Member felt that deliberate primary fires and deliberate secondary fires were a slightly strange performance measure, although it was useful to have the information, there was not a lot of ability to stop arsonists. Obviously, advice could be given to help people secure their buildings, but please could officers advise how the Service works with Thames Valley Police over this issue.

The Head of Prevention and Protection advised Members that as they would see in the pack with deliberate property

fires, there was a spike and a peak between 7pm and midnight and it could be broken down to identify that many of the fires were in the Milton Keynes area, predominantly West Ashland. Prevention were working very closely alongside partners like Thames Vally Police to ensure some of the prevention activity but also working closely with them through developing the Service's threat of arson procedure to ensure reactively and proactively measures were put in place to try and reduce that risk.

The Head of Prevention and Protection advised Members there had been some good success stories through the Forensic Fire Investigation unit, where the Service's teams were investigating, along with Thames Valley Police Crime Scene Investigators, and there had been some excellent results. The Service would continue to try and reduce that risk and ensure that proper sentencing was taking place.

RESOLVED -

That the Performance Management – Q1 2025/26 be noted.

FA23

PROPOSAL FOR EXTENSION OF SAFETY CENTRE FUNDING AGREEMENT

The Head of Prevention and Protection advised Members that this report seeks approval for a six month extension to the current funding arrangement with the Milton Keynes Safety Centre, also known as Hazard Alley. The Safety Centre was the world's first interactive indoor safety education centre. It was first planned in 1992 and officially opened in 1994. The concept was originally developed jointly by Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service and Thames Valley Police, to give children the opportunity to learn about risks and hazards in a completely safe and controlled environment. Today, the centre remained a valued partner, delivering immersive prevention education that directly supported the Service's statutory duties and prevention priorities. It played a particularly important role in supporting the serious violence duty responsibilities and aligns closely with the 2025-2030 Community Risk Management Plan which aims to deliver innovative and targeted fire safety education in partnership with the Safety Centre.

The existing funding agreement provided £25k per year over a three-year period, which totalled £75k concluded on 30 September. This proposal seeks to extend the current

arrangements by six months, until the end of the Authority's financial year for an additional payment of £12.5k. The extension would maintain service delivery whilst developing a new longer term funding agreement within with the Centre's new Chief Executive who commenced her role on 1 September.

The Head of Prevention and Protection advised Members that the reach and impact of the partnership was significant. Between October 2022 and July 2025, the Safety Centre provided direct safety education to over 44,000 children and young people across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. That included over 12,000 pupils who took part in an immersive experience at Hazard Alley and a further 33,000 who engaged through in-school educational outreach, which had grown significantly over the last three years. The extension proposed ensured there was no disruption to the delivery of vital educational programmes, whilst allowing the Service to take a well informed and collaborative approach to designing the next phase of the partnership.

A Member asked about the difference in uptake between Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes in the delivery of SEND provision. In Buckinghamshire there was a problem with special educational needs, but the Member was encouraged to see the large take up by Milton Keynes. There were many children with disability and educational needs who would benefit from this. Could the Service please try to level that graph up in the coming months.

The Head of Prevention and Protection advised Members that officers do look at those impact reports to understand their level of outreach and the level of numbers going through the Safety Centre. To give Members some assurance, the Safety Centre services six surrounding counties as well, and 38% of those that went to an immersive experience were from Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes. Of that 38%, it was very much an even 50/50 split. Officers recognise there was more work that needed to be explored to ensure the outreach programmes reached all areas of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

RESOLVED –

That the extension of the current funding agreement with the Milton Keynes Safety Centre (Hazard Alley) Limited by six months, to 31 March 2026 be approved.

FA24

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 10 December 2025 at 2 pm

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 2.45PM

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 OCTOBER 2025 AT 3 PM.

Present: Councillors Adoh, Bailey (Vice Chairman), Banks, Carroll, Exon, Hall, N Hussain, Lancaster, McLean, Monger (Chairman), Priestley, Rouse, Sherwell, Stuchbury and Wilson

Officers: L Harrison (Chief Fire Officer), S Tuffley (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), D Buchanan (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), R Davidson (Director of People), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets) and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillors Gomm and M Hussain OBE

The Chairman advised that although members of the public were able to attend and observe in person, following the meeting, a video recording would be uploaded to the Authority's YouTube Channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWmIXPWAscxpL3vIiv7bh1Q>

FA25 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

None.

FA26 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

FA27 ON-CALL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE (OCTOBER 2025)

The Chief Fire Officer introduced the On-Call Improvement Programme Update which formed part of a five-year programme of improvement under the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025–2030. This report highlighted the work that had been ongoing for many years, to address the On-Call model, which Members would know had been inefficient and ineffective for a long time.

The Chief Fire Officer had given a commitment to the Authority, to drive improvement and change. This year a small, dedicated team were committed to focus solely on

driving improvement with the On-Call model, because it was recognised as a significant area that needed improvement. Officers had been analysing data and information in order to begin crafting some options for dialogue. The report highlighted the challenges with On-Call but also highlighted the significant amount of work that had been undertaken to address the long-standing issues with availability, sustainability, and effectiveness of what was recognised as an out-dated On-Call model.

The Chief Fire Officer put on record that the Service was blessed to have incredible, dedicated and committed On-Call staff whose desire to serve the communities was not in doubt, but as the report highlighted, there were a myriad of challenges facing On-Call, that were not exclusive to this Service.

The Chief Fire Officer hoped the report illustrated that officers had taken a whole-systems approach to this problem due to its complexity, and the many nuances that impact on availability. The team were working across multiple workstreams from seeking to make improvements with recruitment campaigns, reviewing the contract offer to the On-Call staff and looking at workforce planning; to considering where the Service might replace and reinvest more specialist vehicles. This report seeks to set out at this stage the work that had been done, and the work that would continue to be done up to any prior public consultation, subject to Members approval in November.

The Chief Fire Officer added clarification to the text in Section 2.2 of the report, that the series of workshops mentioned had not exclusively been with Lead Members.

The Chief Fire Officer wanted to take this opportunity to thank everyone who had been positively engaged in dialogue, from officers, On-Call staff, Authority Members and Rep bodies. The commitment to getting this right with a collaborative spirit had been instrumental in this work, and officers continued to work incredibly hard to engage stakeholders, to keep shaping proposals, and ensure that the improvement programme moved forward grounded in factual evidence and data aligned with strategic priorities and values.

This was a complex and sensitive area of work, and the Chief Fire Officer was proud of the way the teams had approached it with integrity, total transparency, and a clear

focus on delivering the best possible outcomes for the communities.

A Member asked if more work could be undertaken on trained wholetime firefighters that live in Buckinghamshire and what was needed to be done to attract them to retain for the Service in the communities and those Stations that needed extra staff.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that he did not have the up-to-date numbers to hand, but would provide them to Members, as he was sure it had increased since last year. Any opportunities for wholetime firefighters to become On-Call would be positive as they were already trained and they would have the opportunity to earn extra money and service the communities where they lived.

A Member asked for clarification on Section 2.5 MP engagement and wanted to place on record that this was not strictly factually correct. Indeed, two Buckinghamshire MPs wrote to the Chief Fire Officer following the Fair Funding Review on 5 September requesting a briefing in relation to this piece of work. They were told they would be briefed, but no briefing was established. They then received a letter, as all MPs did, and indeed Group Leaders saw on 26 September, but that was after the issue of this On-Call service had come into the public domain via their petition.

The Member thought it was worth understanding that the letter was sent out and it was written to imply that engagement was underway. It was underway as a specific result of the petitions and following three weeks of failing to engage with those Members of Parliament. The Member also want to clarify that it was not true that the actions that those Members of Parliament were taking with their petition that officers were not aware of it. Officers were made aware that those petitions were going live that day.

The Member accepted officers may have wanted longer, but they were nonetheless advised before those petitions and any social media activity went live, and indeed officers and the Authority had four days in which it had time to respond to the media and the press release before the press release went into the public domain. The Member thought it was unfortunate that those facts were not represented in the report.

Deputy
Chief Fire
Officer

The Chief Fire Officer clarified to Members that it was probably more a timing issue than anything else. She had taken the decision to brief staff first on what was happening with the On-Call consultation, which she thought was incredibly important.

The Chief Fire Officer had spoken to and written a letter to the MPs around the Fair Funding Review but was very mindful and did not want to conflate the issue of cuts with the On-Call Improvement Programme and wanted to clarify that again. The On-Call Improvement Programme was not about making cuts, it was about making efficiencies, reducing waste and improving the service.

The Member wanted to clarify they were not criticising officers for staff consultation, it was the right thing to do, but so the timeline was clear, the staff consultation briefing took place on the 26 August. The MPs wrote on the 5 September; staff consultation had concluded by that stage. The pre public consultation had started mid-September. MPs received a letter on 26 September when it had concluded. That was the critical timeline.

A Member asked for two points to be clarified as these were two key issues, the HMICFRS findings and the decline in the ability to recruit On-Call staff.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that certainly around the HMICFRS findings, over the last two full inspections, they had identified that there was work to be done to improve how the Service managed risk and resources, and that was very much what officers were trying to achieve. The report broadly articulated that there was a lot of work going on in that area for officers to deliver improvement. There was considerable improvement in the areas from the work that was being undertaken, specific example was the specialist vehicles. The Operational Support Unit was recently relocated to Olney and was achieving 91% availability. That was the kind of availability that officers were trying to get towards through this improvement plan.

A Member advised that the Authority approved the CRMP at its meeting in December 2024, and the Annual Plan was approved on 12 February 2025. As he understood it, this was when the go ahead was given to undertake the work for this, and the intention was that on 12 November 2025 the consultation materials would be presented to the

Authority for approval, was that the correct reading of this report.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that officers were trying to update Members, and the public, on the long history of On-Call improvement. Members who had been on the Authority for a long time would know there had been an acute focus on Wholetime improvement, and the focus was now turning more closely to On-Call. Set out within the CRMP were the areas that officers wanted to explore and look at.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer stressed there were a broad range of things that were being done to try and improve the function of the On-Call. Currently, on average, there were one to two On-Call appliances available on a day or night, and officers were trying to improve this. The Service was meeting its response standards with appliances that were available reliably through Wholetime. The future of On-Call was seen very much around the resilience of the Service for major incidents and times when there was simultaneous activity.

A Member asked for clarity on 3.6 workforce planning and the latest recruitment campaign for On-Call staff which attracted over 29 applicants to date; noting under Item 7 Questions, in question 14 it mentioned 44 applicants, was that a time delay between the production of the report. It was encouraging if there had been a step up of another 15 applicants over that period of time asking if officers could clarify the difference in the data.

The Chief Fire Officer responded that as of today, there had been 44 applicants, which was fantastic news.

The Director of People confirmed there had been 44 applicants and the process was now closed. These applicants would go forward in terms of shortlisting and going through the Service's processes and procedures.

A Member wanted to make it clear that the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) was a five-year plan that was meant to set the direction and priorities for the Service against its risk backdrop and to give officers the flexibility to adapt the Service against a changing landscape in that period. The reason the plan was brought forward was because the previous Public Safety Plan was insufficient in the flexibility afforded to officers. That was not a mandate

to cut fire engines, it was a mandate to look at what the Service needed.

The Member stated that in his opinion, this was without doubt the worst paper that had been put in front of the Authority since his time on the Authority. It was the responsibility of officers to set out challenges to the Authority about how the Service should develop. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer had set out the challenge in the last few years which had been increasing Wholetime firefighter numbers, and when seeing the availability now, Members could see the benefit of that work. It was the responsibility of Members to bring the balance of what the community would accept when it comes to changing its service.

The Member felt the other issue with the report was that it took activities in the past that go back nearly a decade as though they were relevant and dismissed something that happened three years ago in terms of the use of all the fire engines. In Buckinghamshire, Members were going to see a significant number of solar farms, data centres, plus housing. The work was not going into sufficient depth to look at the future requirements of the community.

The backdrop to the February workshop of all Executive Committee Members was that it required the Service to invest. Members asked officers to look at what could be done with stations and to continue investing. The proposals being progressed were simply cuts.

The Member stated that the reason the Conservative Members would not note this report and would vote to decline the report was that this was the first opportunity to stop officers spending more time, money, and effort on proposals that simply would not get public support.

A Member stated the Chief Fire Officer had said there would be no cuts and further investment in the Service overall. The previous Member was saying that this would mean substantial cuts. Was the Member saying that the Service should stay in stasis forever, no matter what the challenges and ramifications of population change and people working.

A Member asked the Chairman where he got the number of 4,000 new homes being built, as the total number of homes being built during the plan period was 165,000 not 95,000. The combined county of Buckinghamshire and

Milton Keynes was in growth mode. As politicians, Members sit in the communities, and understand their communities and Members were the ones that had to give the Service strategic direction. There was a lack of political direction currently within this Authority.

The Chairman advised Members that he had been involved in planning on Aylesbury Vale District Council and now at Buckinghamshire Council for many years. It was an area he followed closely, and he fully understood the government's housing target for Buckinghamshire was 4,300 houses per annum. At the current time, the Council was not achieving even 3,900 per annum, so it was a long way from being in a situation where it would get to 95,000 houses. Houses do not appear overnight in their hundreds of thousands. Typical developments were built out at 150 houses per annum and there were also issues to do with land availability.

The Chairman advised the Authority would need to maintain a close eye on development and select where and when to develop the Service to support those areas. New homes were of far less risk than other properties. It was entirely possible that Fire Authorities may be included in the opportunity to seek Section 106 contributions, which would give this Service the opportunity to get capital input, and for example, in relation to potentially getting a new location in a significant growth area.

There was also the Community Infrastructure Levy that potentially could be available by watching the development and maintaining pace with it, the Service could take advantage of these if they were available. The Service would also know where to locate additional services. At present, the county was still two years away from a detailed local plan.

The Chairman saw the proposals as a reset. A reset from which the Service could build for the future so that the issues of today could be addressed and indeed issues that had been building over at least five years with the On-Call service and begin to prepare for the future.

The Chief Fire Officer noted the comments and wanted to give reassurance to Members, and any members of the public who may be listening and who may be confused about what was being talked about today. The focus had always been when setting out the CRMP, Annual Plan and

the standards and values, about having the right fire engines in the right places at the right times supported by dedicated On-Call firefighters. The programme the Service was looking to achieve was about ensuring reliability because the Service did not have that in all its On-Call stations yet. Making sure the Service had resilience in place and reinvesting any savings that were made, and savings were not what was driving this improvement programme. It was not a cost cutting exercise but looking to see whether traditional fire engines could be replaced with a smaller rural firefighting unit, that does not require as many staff to get it mobilised, so therefore the opportunities of having better availability were increased with this programme.

As Members would be aware, many of the On-Call stations continue to suffer long term dormancy with fire engines that had not been used in many years because the Service does not have the staff in the right places to resource them and that was no reflection on the dedicated staff.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that this report had been rushed as officers wanted to get the facts and information out really quickly, because part of the process that officers were now going through, the pre consultation only finished the previous day, so officers had not had the opportunity to get all the information and data out that would support some of the proposals being talked about.

It was important to reemphasise these were still conversations in the early stages to scope what might be able to be done. The Chief Fire Officer did not want to present options regarding replacing vehicles here and replace them there, because the Service was not at that stage yet.

The Chief Fire Officer stated that officers would never consider proposals that would put the community at risk. Officers wanted to ensure that the Service had sufficient cover and could meet its response standards across the whole of the county and that was what officers were still working to do.

A Member advised there had been two HMICFRS reports which suggested that this Service needed an overhaul. The HMICFRS were coming again next year, and it would be in Members' interests that they had a sensible response to what the Service had done about that and how it was doing

it. That does not necessarily mean the proposals that might be in the On-Call Improvement Programme, but it certainly does need to include the recruitment activity that was being undertaken, and it needed to show willing to make progress. The second point was about the word 'consultation'. One of the problems with consultations generally, was people assume the decision had already been taken and it was pointless and that was the same with any consultation. That was precisely why the Lead Members were right to say they were not committed to the proposals in the consultation.

The crucial thing about consultations was that it gave people the opportunity to put forward alternatives. Now Members had heard a lot about why the proposals were believed to be unacceptable but let officers use the consultation to bring forward alternatives.

Whatever the alternative, something needed to be done about the On-Call Service. There were fire engines that had been sitting almost idle for five years. They were not effectively part of the Service, how do they become part of the Service. There should be some constructive views of moving forward in a different way.

A Member asked why this report was not brought forward earlier and why were these situations not taken seriously earlier. There was one big responsibility here and that was not to frighten the public and to put out issues about decisions that had not yet been taken regarding the consultation. How could the Service have a consultation about something when already the consultation was taking place about an actuality that had not been agreed and how do we then move forward the consultation with evidence that was clear and not defined and had not been canvassed against.

The Member was worried that any consultation going forward after this may have already been damaged and may not be able to produce a clear and honest result, and that was important. There was a responsibility to the residents of Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire, to be frank, honest and open and put a proposal in front of them to consider.

A Member felt that what he had heard today would shatter the confidence of the community and was appalled by it

and certainly he was never going to go along with it, it was not about finance but about public confidence.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer as the strategic sponsor for this work, wanted to give Members some assurance around this, and also to reiterate some of the points the Chief Fire Officer made around some of the challenges the Service had. As the Deputy Chief Fire Officer had said, the Service had made significant improvement around its Wholetime provision, but ultimately, when it comes to the On-Call element of the response provision, the Service was failing to meet its commitment to the public in respect of being an excellent modern agile fire service.

Officers saw this as optimising the On-Call staff the Service had and genuinely believed that proposals could be brought forward that would increase public safety and would also provide better value for money for the taxpayer. Officers really anticipated they can increase availability and resilience as well for On-Call.

In terms of community and staff perception, some of the work that had been done already in terms of early engagement with staff and the public through focus groups, had been valuable in shaping up final considerations around what officers want to bring forward for public consultation. The feedback received from staff and focus groups showed that people understood the problems the Service was trying to resolve and understood that the Service needed to do some things differently. That had given officers confidence that a case could be presented to Members for an alternative approach that ultimately would provide better outcomes.

A Member wanted to thank officers for the report that was rushed because it had been asked for at short notice. In a national environment where On-Call recruitment had been very difficult, it was absolutely the right move to look at different options for vehicles and different employment models. If the public were scared, it was because the public had been told through social media that there were cuts to the Service. This was about modernisation and change; it was about not staying in the past.

The Member had not lent their opposition or support to proposals, but it was important that the Service engaged with people at the correct time in an open way, without

giving them incorrect information and going forward to see what could be done.

A Member felt that having experienced the phase the Service had gone through of being on inspection, and the due diligence and hard work that had been done by officers to get improvement, now felt let down because if the Service had achieved so much, why were officers talking about making changes, just because the Service needed to do something differently. There was nothing that needed to be done if it was working, and the Service needed the confidence of its residents and that was very important.

The Chief Fire Officer wanted to again give some reassurance. The Service did well in the inspection because it worked incredibly hard. Wholtime numbers were increased, and governance changes were made. When it came to looking at On-Call through the lens of HMICFRS the response times were good. The time it takes for the Service to get to somebody who needs help was good, but officers know that only a certain number of appliances were needed to be able to do that. Officers were not making change for changes sake. Officers know the Service was spending a significant amount of money on a resource that was not able to be used.

Officers were looking at this now, as they think the Service could improve and increase availability. To do that they were going to look at what appliances the Service had got, and where and how the On-Call model was resourced and that's what they were hoping to present to Members in November.

A Member stated this was an On-Call Improvement Programme and officers had talked about on-call recruitment earlier on and there were a variety of aspects in terms of doing that. The internal audit report on workforce availability raised a number of serious questions both in terms of numbers and the ability to train those On-call firefighters. If the Service had a model that relied on this hybrid model, the hybrid model needed to be working in the most efficient way it possibly could.

The Member was interested to learn about putting wholtime fire engines into different places. The reason the Service was not in crisis was because wholtime recruitment was over establishment, and the Service was using additional hours for Wholtime firefighters to help

support that. The Service needed to find other mechanisms to deal with some of the deficits that it had elsewhere.

Members only had to look at the On-Call availability of staff to see it was not right and something had to be done about it. It was an inefficiency and efficiency was important here, because Members did have to consider not cuts, but value for money and trying to make sure they had the best improved service they possibly could.

It was very important that Members had this debate because it was important that everybody's point of view got aired here, and everybody was given the opportunity to participate as much as they could. Let's get the best ideas on the table and Members would support the best ideas out there.

Councillor Rouse formally proposed a recorded vote which was supported by two Members, details of the recorded vote are set out below:

	For	Against
Adoh		✓
Bailey	✓	
Banks	✓	
Carroll		✓
Exon	✓	
Hall		✓
Hussain N	✓	
Lancaster	✓	
McLean		✓
Monger	✓	
Priestley	✓	
Rouse		✓
Sherwell	✓	

Stuchbury	✓	
Wilson	✓	

RESOLVED –

That the On-Call Improvement Programme Update Report (October 2025) be noted.

FA28 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 10 December 2025 at 2 pm

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 3.56PM

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2025 AT 2 PM.

Present: Councillors Adoh, Bailey (Vice Chairman), Banks, Carroll, Exon (part), Gomm, Hall, M Hussain (OBE), N Hussain, Lancaster, McLean, Monger (Chairman), Priestley, Rouse, Sherwell, Stuchbury and Wilson

Officers: L Harrison (Chief Fire Officer), S Tuffley (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), D Buchanan (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets) and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: None

The Chairman advised that although members of the public were able to attend and observe in person, following the meeting, a video recording would be uploaded to the Authority's YouTube Channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWmIXPWAscxpL3vIiv7bh1Q>

FA29 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

None.

FA30 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

FA31 PETITIONS

None.

FA32 QUESTIONS

The Chairman advised Members there had been four written questions submitted in advance of the meeting under SOA7. The questions and responses had been shared with Members and put on the Authority's website. Any of the questioners' present would be allowed to ask one supplementary question. It would be helpful if Members could refer to the question number on the printed copies.

Question 1 – Councillor Rouse asked Councillor N Hussain the following supplementary question – Given that the cost

of the pre-public consultation, which was not approved by any governance structure of this Authority, and the future cost of a full public consultation amounts the equivalent of a competent wholetime firefighter, will you join me at any point before the public consultation in refusing to allow it to proceed?

Councillor N Hussain responded to Councillor Rouse – I stand by my written answer.

Question 2 – Councillor Rouse asked Councillor N Hussain the following supplementary question – I am sure you are deeply embarrassed by the answer that you had to give on Great Missenden Fire Station. So given that Great Missenden was subject to a restricted covenant, which means that it always has to be a Fire Station. Would you put on the record now that any proposals future or current to close Great Missenden Fire Station would be removed, and the Authority would never close Great Missenden Fire Station.

Councillor N Hussain responded to Councillor Rouse – I stand by my written answer.

Question 3 – Councillor Rouse asked Councillor N Hussain the following supplementary question – I think I can draw the conclusion from your answer, that you did not discuss the business case assumptions with officers, even though as Lead Member for Finance and Assets, the assumptions were utterly ridiculous. I would like to ask you, given that you are Lead Member for Finance and Assets, and you receive a special responsibility allowance, do you understand that it required you to take responsibility, and do you understand your position was looking increasingly untenable.

Councillor N Hussain responded to Councillor Rouse -I stand by my written answer.

Question 4 – Councillor Gomm asked Councillor Stuchbury the following supplementary question – I have made a point since the last meeting that there needs to be more services in the north. I handed you an envelope to remind you of the question. Councillor Stuchbury you stated in the answer back to me that you could not quite remember, you recall that it mentioned about Buckingham Station, the papers that I've submitted to you now, do you recall that you did realise it did discuss Buckingham Fire Station?

Councillor Stuchbury responded to Councillor Gomm – I’m not used to receiving brown envelopes and as you gave it to me 2-5 minutes ago and expect me to have read it in 5 minutes. I refer to my written answer that no decision has been taken.

FA33 NOTICE OF MOTION – CESSATION OF WORK TO CUT FIRE ENGINES AND CLOSE FIRE STATIONS THROUGH “ON CALL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME”

The motion was proposed by Councillor Rouse and seconded by Councillor Hall.

Councillor Rouse stated that over the course of the last few months since June, he had seen nothing short of the complete and utter collapse of Member scrutiny and governance at this Fire Authority. In February when he was Chairman of this Authority, he convened a working group of the Executive Committee. This was to make sure that every single political group had an opportunity to hear from officers what the challenges were with On-Call and some potential options. The meeting sent a clear message to officers that the proposals were not going to command the full support of the Authority, and they needed to be thought again.

Those same proposals, almost identical bar the shift of one fire station, were put in front of new Members, Lead Members, that had barely been in situ for a month. The meeting asked Members to provide support to proceed to public consultation. It then set out two options for removing eight fire engines across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes and the closure of Stokenchurch and Great Missenden Fire Stations.

Councillor Rouse said the reason those proposals did not progress in February was because the Conservative Group did not support them.

Councillor Rouse advised when Members of the Conservative Group came onto the Authority three years ago, they were told it was almost impossible to recruit the wholetime firefighter numbers that were needed. The Conservative Group set the leadership and political direction and said that was what needed to be done. Today wholetime firefighters and wholetime availability was where it needed to be.

Councillor Rouse felt that what was done in July was allow a proposal to go forward that would significantly damage community confidence in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Members had an opportunity in July to send a clear message that they did not support these proposals, just as the Executive Committee Working Group had done. Also, excluding the Conservative group from those discussions, because they would have said why it was rejected in the first place.

Councillor Rouse felt it should have gone to the Executive Committee. The fact that it did not and money has been spent on a pre public consultation, community confidence damage was on Lead Members. The consultation results should be sent to the Executive Committee, and the Executive Committee should debate the cuts.

Councillor Rouse also wanted to set out that these cuts were the wrong cuts, and the Service should be investing.

Councillor Rouse was afraid that at a time when Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes was growing, the Service should be investing. There were options for On-Call improvement and there were things that should be done to radically overhaul them.

Councillor Rouse asked Members to support this motion and let it be sent to the Executive Committee and let the Fire Authority get its governance and scrutiny back in order.

Councillor Bailey advised it was stated clearly by Members last week; no decisions were made at the July workshop that led to a change in the operational capability of this Service. The Lead Members provided support and structured challenge to senior officers in developing strategies and plans, which was clearly stated as part of their role.

Councillor Bailey advised that operational independence of the Chief Fire Officer should of course be discussed in greater depth in due course. Councillor Bailey felt Members had taken to political point scoring in an attempt to override the judgement of highly qualified professionals in the pursuit of strategic development. Councillor Bailey believed steps should be taken to ensure the Chief Fire Officer's ability to fulfil the post more independently with

suitable checks and balances, but without unnecessary political interference.

Councillor Bailey advised that how to improve the On-Call programme would be considered at the appropriate levels when all relevant elements had been collected, considered and incorporated into a final plan. Councillor Bailey would not support this motion.

Councillor Hall raised a point of order that Councillor Bailey had clearly involved officers in the debate. This was a political debate among politicians.

The Chairman stated that the point of order was noted but it referenced a position rather than an individual.

Councillor N Hussain advised that in going through this motion, it quite correctly says the full Authority and its Committees were the decision-making bodies, but Councillor Rouse said these proposals were presented by officers in an informal working group. What decision making authority does an informal working group have, when Councillor Rouse said himself that the full Authority and the Committees were the decision-making bodies of the Authority, a total contradiction.

Councillor N Hussain advised there had been no proposals put forward yet, all that was going along were plans made when Councillor Rouse was Chairman.

Councillor N Hussain found it really strange to be asked on one hand for flexibility and imagination and then saying it was going to tie your hands as to what the Authority can and cannot do to realise and use its resources efficiently in answer to an inspection report.

Councillor N Hussain also found it strange that the Conservative Party were against cuts, but nowhere was the issue of cuts raised, there were no cuts just investment.

Councillor Rouse asked the Chairman given that Councillor N Hussain's speech was directed at him, he would like to exercise his right for a personal explanation.

The Chairman advised that references were made to previous meetings, and he did not think there were any question of casting aspersions on Councillor Rouse personally.

(Councillor Exon joined the meeting)

Councillor Carroll was sad that it had got to this situation, going along a road to actually close stations in Buckinghamshire. It was not needed, the Chief Fire Officer had already said previously there was no financial gain from this whatsoever and £33k would be spent on this exercise if it went through.

Councillor Carroll felt people were worried about this particularly when there were thousands of houses coming online in this area. The structure needed to be in place to call upon in the future. The Authority had a fantastic reputation and look at what had been achieved. The Blue Light Hub was put in place for the communities; it was a community hub. A great facility for residents and now the Service was taking facilities away.

Councillor McLean advised he was concerned that as a consequence of this, whilst there were low numbers of On-Call firefighters, if On-Call firefighters had to travel further for training, or to go on a shout, natural wastage was likely to be more than expected. There was also less opportunity for the On-Call firefighters to do what most like to do, which was get on a truck and go to a shout because that was what they were really in it for.

Councillor McLean felt there was a lot of growth in Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire, and whilst all new homes and business premises were a lot safer than they used to be, there were more of them, and reducing the pool and resources to support them was not a good idea.

The impact of climate change was more noticeable now, with flooding in Milton Keynes and if there was going to be more heavy rainfall leading to flooding, the Service was going to need more than 22 engines at a time. There would also be a need in the summer when it was dry.

Councillor McLean thought officers should go back and review the proposal and then bring it forward in a different way.

Councillor Wilson advised Members he had attended a meeting of the LGA Fire Services Committee, which Councillor Rouse also attended, and it was referenced there was an issue around On-Call and the issue was a national one. Councillor Wilson felt it was important that it was recognised it was a national issue, not a

Buckinghamshire issue, and it does require creativity, as was suggested.

Councillor Wilson had an issue with this motion which was the misrepresentation of his position in this. Councillor Rouse had acknowledged it, but there had been no amendment to this motion.

Councillor Wilson advised that as others had said, it was his view that the terms of reference do enable the need to offer support and advice and act as a critical friend to officers. He believed the context that had been presented at the meeting was very much in the way it was intended. It was very clear that the meeting was intended to, particularly for new Lead Members, provide an update and briefing. As a participant invited to attend the meeting, it was very clear that all due process needed to be followed, and he was left in no doubt that was intended to be in place.

Councillor Wilson advised that from his point of view the motion was factually incorrect. It did not reflect the nature of what was being intended for a workshop of new Lead Members, and it leapt to conclusions that were not supported by where Members were right now, and he could not support the motion.

Councillor Stuchbury advised that the reality of the situation was that there was going to be a change to On-Call firefighting and he knew it was difficult for people to adjust to that. The reality of it was the meeting that took place was nothing more than working through proposals which had been worked on and to go forward to an open public consultation. That decision had not been taken. That decision would be taken in a meeting of the fully Authority. If assumptions were being made on previous paperwork, they were not on the present paperwork.

Councillor Stuchbury felt Members needed to focus on one thing which the report would bring forward if it was agreed, and that was how the Authority makes best use of all its resources. Taking into consideration future growth, the shape of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes was going to change, and the report would reflect that.

Councillor Stuchbury's main concern was if it was decided to go out for consultation, the consultation may have been damaged by the actions of some Members.

Councillor Stuchbury could not support the motion because it was a politically motivated motion.

Councillor Gomm advised Members that it was quite sad they were in this situation; he wanted to talk about the northern area because it had been talked about recently regarding rural fires and the need of looking after it in case it happened again. Buckingham itself was expanding with a new estate over one side and planning permission going through for another, taking away an engine was not looking after the future growth that was going to happen. Councillor Gomm felt there was a great service coming out from Buckingham and Winslow and he was quite surprised it was even proposed.

Councillor Priestley advised when reading through this motion, and she accepted that Members were all politicians, apart from the wonderful officers who were doing a fantastic job, there was that potential to get into political point scoring, it was inevitable, but Members needed to keep in their sights who they were here for which was their communities as Councillor Carroll had already spoken about.

Councillor Priestley asked where the Motion said public confidence had been damaged, how exactly was it being measured and what was the empirical evidence for it. What had been done to represent that rather than putting in a Motion that she felt was unfounded.

Councillor Adoh advised Members that her concern was public confidence. She had taken on board a lot of the comments made by everybody and did not want to take away from the experience of colleagues in the new team. However, she wondered if the current Executive have had enough time to review the reason for the initial rejection of this proposal by the previous Executive and actually had time to discuss it with them. Meeting the needs of residents was very important and she believed if that had been done, things would not be where they were now.

Councillor Adoh advised that the number of engines that could be stored in her ward Stokenchurch, should not be overlooked. There was development coming up and if there was an issue on the motorway, people would have to wait longer or go elsewhere if this one engine was lost.

Councillor Adoh advised that looking at the issue of public confidence, it was about reinvestment. Public confidence was vital and needed to be considered.

Councillor Sherwell advised Members that having public confidence was important and colleagues in the Conservative Party were putting out information about the consultation which was completely inaccurate. The consultation had not even been agreed, so it was premature, and any lack of public confidence came from a purely misguided campaign.

Councillor Sherwell advised that the way that Councillor Rouse had approached this had not encouraged communal working. There were issues that needed to be discussed, one was On-Call which had been mentioned in two HMICFRS inspection reports. There was another inspection next year and the Authority needed to be in a position to say that it had taken those inspection reports seriously. Members had mentioned quite rightly global warming and the challenge of flooding, wildfire and new building. The Authority needed proposals to tackle those things, and one was the new rural firefighting vehicle seen at the last meeting.

Councillor Sherwell advised that the Authority does need to have a full strategy for dealing with the new builds and he hoped the Authority would be making representations to the Buckinghamshire local plan. Building thousands of new houses was not solved by On-Call firefighters in Great Missenden, but that was not a reason for abolishing Great Missenden Fire Station, that was a separate issue. The issue coming was how the Authority organise the Service efficiently, and he was happy for this to go forward as a rational discussion to the process.

Councillor M Hussain OBE advised Members his concern was the population of the county was going up and housing was going up and Members were here to represent their communities. What were people going to think about the Service reducing rather than improving and that was his concern.

Councillor M Hussain OBE advised there was recently an incident in High Wycombe where a person was killed. The first fire engine was there in no time, because it was available and they had a very good service and the people

of High Wycombe were really proud of the Service as it stands, going any further down would cause a problem.

The Chairman advised Members that it seemed to him the substance of this Motion was that Lead Members, officers and some other Members had acted beyond their authority. Plans had been laid to reduce cover by the Service to the consternation of the public and that of course an apology should be made by the Chair.

The Chairman advised that for the avoidance of doubt, there was no question of Lead Members having acted beyond the level of their authority, all that had happened was that officers had continued to investigate options for the On-Call Improvement Programme. No commitment to any proposal had been made. The mover of the Motion, Councillor Rouse, was on record as recognising the excellent senior leadership team of highly qualified professionals, who continued to work on proposals to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the whole fire and rescue service, including the On-Call element.

The Chairman advised that in November a report would come to the Authority to seek agreement to proceed to a ten week long public consultation on proposals to improve the service to the community. There would be ample scope for further scrutiny of the proposals, and the input from the consultation with the general public. A review, subject to the Authority's agreement of that input, would take place leading to a final proposal coming to the Authority in March 2026.

The Chairman advised that any changes ultimately proposed would be directed at improving the overall performance of the Service. It was not a cost saving exercise. Any net saving would be ploughed back into the Service, the object being to ensure that it had the right equipment in the right place at the right time. There was no intent to reduce the number of firefighters.

The work currently under way was a clear strand of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) covering the period 2025 to 2030. The plan approved by the Authority in December 2024.

The Chairman advised that Objective 3 of the CRMP said "Optimises structure and function of operational resources to meet preparedness requirements, managing asset types,

numbers and locations to mitigate identified risks.” It was clear in the CRMP that this was what was planned.

The Chairman advised the Annual Plan approved by the Authority on 20 February 2025 specifically referenced the On-Call work stream as a deliverable in year one of the plan. This was not a new situation, the last two HMICFRS inspection reports pointed out issues with the On-Call Service as most Members were aware.

The inspection report of 2019 stated that the 18 On-Call fire engines were only available 13.6% of the time. This reflected the difficulty the Service had in recruiting On-Call firefighters and this was experienced nationally. The inspection report in 2023 stated it was unclear why the Service needed so many additional fire engines when its daily demand pattern was consistently met with 12 available fire engines. Reference was also made to the On-Call units being described as a ghost fleet.

The Chairman advised that the Authority was funding fire engines and fire stations that were not in use, when the cost and resource could be converted into more appropriate equipment and improved facilities for staff. The Service had been consistently unable to recruit On-Call firefighters, and as said before, this was a nationwide problem. Of course, the Service wants to recruit more On-Call staff, but it would take five years to create a fully-fledged team from scratch. The Authority was unable to do that and interestingly, between those two HMI reports of 2018 and 2023, it was not addressed. The current model simply does not work, and that had been the position for several years. The situation needed to be addressed now.

The Chairman advised that the Motion before Members was no more than a political event, which would further delay necessary improvements to the service offered to the communities in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Proposals for improvements would come to the full Authority with the full suite of supporting data. The public would be able to have substantial input into any proposed changes.

Members would have the opportunity to debate the final proposals, including any changes subject to public input. That was a significant level of scrutiny for proposals coming from a leadership team that Members agree was at the top of its game and of whom Members were all justly proud.

The Chairman urged Members to vote against the Motion so that they could get on with supporting the professionals whose only interest was maximising the effectiveness, efficiency and commitment of those who serve under Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority.

Councillor Hall confirmed he was seconding the motion.

Councillor Hall asked why the largest group, the Conservative Group on the Fire Authority, was excluded from the workshop and whose decision was it. Councillor Hall felt that the Members had briefings and as Councillors, know what's coming. Members see the size of the growth, and as such, understand it.

Councillor Hall advised that in this Service, Members give the political governance to it, and when Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes were in significant growth mode, expected the Service to be in significant growth mode as well. This proposal says nothing about what the Service would look like in three or five years' time. All it says to him was in three years' time, there would be 310 wholetime firefighters and in five years' time there would be 310 wholetime firefighters and less fire engines and less stations and that was not acceptable to residents.

Councillor Hall felt this was going against what the public think and what the public want. If Members looked at social media and seen the furore, people see cuts, and these are cuts. They are cuts for the sake of cuts. The Service was not saying to the public it was going to close a couple of stations, remove some pumps, but here you go it was going to get 13 wholetime appliances on the run in 2027, and have 14 on the run in 2028. Perhaps if the Conservative group would have been included in the workshop, this outcome might have been different.

Councillor Hall advised the Chairman that he had mentioned politics a number of times, and it was a political decision to exclude the largest group on this Authority from a workshop that had come up with this ridiculous plan that goes against everything that the public expect. Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes were in growth mode, and was expecting 165,000 houses, equivalent of a town the size of High Wycombe, and to think there were not going to be any more fire engines added to Buckinghamshire, it showed how out of touch the controlling political direction of the Members really was.

Councillor Rouse advised that the debate showed that the Chairman had no idea what he was doing and he did not need a lecture on the CRMP, he was the person that decided it needed to be brought forward because the previous plan was inflexible. The CRMP provided a strategic framework, it does not say cut the number of fire engines and close stations. That is why in February, post CRMP, Members said no.

Councillor Rouse advised that this was about people losing their fire engines permanently and two fire stations. Councillor Rouse advised that people on the doorstep were signing their petition. It was already well over 1000 signatures and had been growing every day. That was empirical evidence. The press were here because they know the public were worried.

Councillor Rouse wanted to address some other facts that were wrong. A workshop in July met and was asked to seek Member support to proceed to public consultation. At that stage, money was spent by pre public consultation, putting these plans in the public domain and on a staff consultation. In that staff consultation, it said Lead Members gave the authorization to proceed to this stage of the process. The reason that the Conservative Group said no to these proposals was because they know it would devastate rural Buckinghamshire.

Councillor Rouse had spent three years immersed in the service and it did not need to cut fire engines and certainly not close fire stations. Councillor Rouse felt they should be repurposed when needed as community safety hubs and for vehicles to be parked there, that was the creativity that should be put in place.

Councillor Rouse advised he was the only person in this room that sat in with HMI and argued that their approach to this misunderstands that the Service was not just about operational efficiency but also the community confidence it was able to generate. The Service holds strong public confidence today because the community know their fire service was there and that was why the Conservative Group was trying to stop it going to public consultation.

Councillor Rouse advised this was nothing other than a set of proposals that when the public see it go to public consultation, they would think it was a done deal. That is why he had to stop it now. That was what happened when

you take control of a Fire Authority. Let Members get the officers thinking through creative solutions as they were asked to do in February. Councillor Rouse urged Members to support this motion.

Councillor Rouse formally proposed a recorded vote which was supported by two Members, details of the recorded vote are set out below:

	For	Against
Adoh	✓	
Bailey		✓
Banks		✓
Carroll	✓	
Exon		✓
Gomm	✓	
Hall	✓	
Hussain M OBE	✓	
Hussain N		✓
Lancaster		✓
McLean	✓	
Monger		✓
Priestley		✓
Rouse	✓	
Sherwell		✓
Stuchbury		✓
Wilson		✓

On being put to the vote, the motion was NOT CARRIED.

FA34 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 10 December 2025 at 2 pm

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 3.56PM

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Executive Committee, 12 November 2025

Report title: Performance Management – Q2 2025/26

Lead Member: Councillor Llew Monger, Fire Authority Chair

Report sponsor: Simon Tuffley, Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Chief Operating Officer

Author and contact: Craig Newman, Data Intelligence Team Manager,
cnewman@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Noting and Approval

Recommendation:

That the report and recommendation below be approved for submission to the Fire Authority:

1. It is recommended that the Performance Management – Q2 2025/26 be noted.
-

Executive summary:

The Service monitors its performance on a monthly basis across three delivery boards. These then feed the Performance Board and the Strategic Leadership Board. One of the tools used to monitor performance is a Key Performance Measures pack. This is scrutinised, with any actions arising being captured and monitored.

The attached report now details 53 specific performance measures selected from the above-mentioned key performance measure pack. These are split across the Service's six objectives, as defined in the 2025-2030 community risk management plan (CRMP):

- 1) Reducing risk and keeping our community safe
- 2) Protecting people from the risk in the built environment
- 3) Responding quickly and effectively to emergencies
- 4) An Inclusive, healthy and engaged workforce
- 5) Making the most of our finances and assets
- 6) Optimising our technology and data

This report comprises of the Service performance against these measures for Q2 2025/26. This includes detail that shows performance alongside relevant trend information and where needed commentary.

At the end of Q2, 51 measures reported with a Blue, Green, Amber or Red status, one is awaiting information and one is currently for monitoring purposes only.

BRAG	Total	%
B	19	36%
G	18	34%
A	7	13%
R	7	13%
-	2	4%

Highlighted measures:

Objectives & Half Year Review

As of the end of September, objective setting returns reached 96%, up from 93% in August, successfully meeting our target following a final push. We have now begun reporting on half-year review returns, with the first month exceeding the 25% target, indicating strong initial engagement.

Monthly reports continue to support managers by identifying gaps in appraisal returns and comparing performance against target. Training sessions have been delivered throughout September and October to address barriers and support completion.

The Thrive Leadership Programme is enhancing leadership capability, focusing on improving the quality of conversations through coaching techniques such as the GROW model. These skills are being embedded in daily interactions and appraisals, particularly in Module 3, which aims to improve the quality and impact of appraisal conversations. We expect this to lead to more meaningful dialogue, improved documentation, and increased motivation and recognition for staff.

Bank Shifts

During Q2, there was a modest increase in bank shift numbers, primarily driven by a combination of long-term absences and seasonal leave pressures. One of these absences is offset by cost recovery arrangements linked to secondments, helping to mitigate the overall financial impact.

While the figures are slightly above those recorded in the same period last year, they remain comparatively low when viewed against historical trends. This reflects continued efforts to manage staffing levels efficiently.

In response to the data, officers have proactively implemented changes to the way leave is allocated, particularly around peak periods. These adjustments are aimed at further flattening demand for bank shifts in future years, ensuring a more balanced and sustainable approach to workforce planning.

Availability - On Call

It should be noted that the On-Call availability KPM is a directional target. For this reason, and based on improved performance compared with the previous reporting year, the RAG status is green for quarter 2. This modest improvement in performance can largely be attributed to some good work undertaken in relation to contract management for existing staff.

However, the current average of 16% across 18 appliances remains below the level required for operational resilience and does not represent value for money. Officers continue to explore opportunities for improvement within business as usual arrangements alongside scoping proposals for more significant change within the On-Call Improvement Programme.

Social Media – Engagement

A strong and consistent social media presence is vital for our Service as it enables us to connect with the public. By producing engaging content, we are able to grow our audiences and create the reach we need to share critical safety messages that help protect our communities, while also driving people towards our other channels such as the website. Recruitment activity has been a key driver of increased engagement, showcasing the Service as modern, excellent, and a welcoming place to work, supporting our ambition to be an employer of choice. Sharing our stories and successes helps build morale, inspire pride, and reinforce staff engagement, while social media more broadly is a key part of a multi-channel communications approach. Recent media training has equipped our leaders to act as advocates, further strengthening visibility and trust.

Financial implications: A detailed understanding of the Service's performance allows informed decision making in relation to future resource allocation. The balance of measures also allows an understanding of the Service's financial performance and enables a view to be formed of its overall value for money compared with others.

Risk management: Performance and risk information is designed and presented to assist the Authority in the strategic decision-making through understanding the communities we serve and associated risk profiles. Performance management information is a major contributor to service improvement and to the effective prioritisation of resources.

Legal implications: There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Privacy and security implications: There are no Privacy and Security implications arising from this paper.

Duty to collaborate: There are no opportunities to collaborate directly from this report.

Health and safety implications: There are no specific Health, Safety and Wellbeing implications arising from this paper. Performance reports on Health & Safety is subject to separate scrutiny and performance reporting.

Environmental implications: There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications: There are no specific Equality, diversity and inclusion implications arising from this paper.

Consultation and communication: We aim to provide performance information incorporating stakeholder contributions. The report will be circulated throughout the organisation for information and awareness.

Board	Date	Outcome
CRMP Performance Board	21 October 2025	Approved
Strategic Leadership Board	21 October 2025	Approved
Executive Committee	12 November 2025	
Fire Authority	10 December 2025	

Next steps -

- The performance measures will be reported quarterly
- Indicators and targets will be reviewed annually

Background papers:

Fire Authority, 08 October 2025: Performance Management – Q1 2025/25
[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority, 08/10/2025 14:00](#)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	BFRS Key Performance Measures – Q2 – 25-26	N/A



KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES - 2025-2026

QUARTER TWO - JUL to SEP

Introduction

This Key Performance Measures report has been designed as a rounded and balanced picture of how the Service is performing at a local level.

Due to the regular frequency of this report being produced, most indicators used within each measures represent change within the Service and does not always represent good or bad performance. For example, Accidental Dwelling Fires could increase, yet still have the fewest number within the country (relative). This level of detail will be covered in annual reports and ad-hoc reports when requested, as most national data is published annually.

The report contains many types of targets and methods of comparison. Some targets are aspirational, some are there to ensure minimum standards are met and others are there to identify exceptions within trends, allowing us to identify possible needs for change/reaction.

	Monthly (in most cases)	Cumulative (in most cases)
Better than expected	B	B
As expected (within trend/target)	G	G
Worse than expected	A	A
Considerably worse than expected	R	R

REDUCING RISK AND KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY SAFE



PRV.1.03 - Home Fire Safety Visits Completed

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
	Target	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	B > 10%
	2025/2026	368	469	430	464	468	432							G Within 10%
	Status	G	B	G	B	B	G							A < 10%
Cumulative		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
	Target	400	800	1200	1600	2000	2400	2800	3200	3600	4000	4400	4800	What is good
	2025/2026	368	837	1267	1731	2199	2632							More is better
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G							

Ref	PRV.1.03	The total number of HFSV completed from all sources. This includes referrals, hot strikes and targeted locations. This does not include any advice given online.
Owner	Prevention	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery Group	

Whilst it is positive to see that our teams have exceeded the quarterly target, it is especially encouraging that a significant proportion of visits have been delivered to those most at risk, specifically, households where at least one occupant is considered to be at greater risk from the effects of a fire in the home.

PRV.1.04 - Home Fire Safety Visits - % Vulnerable

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
	Target	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	B => 80%
	2025/2026	83%	78%	75%	81%	80%	82%							G => 70%
	Status	B	G	G	B	B	B							A => 60%
Cumulative		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
	Target	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	What is good
	2025/2026	83%	80%	78%	79%	79%	80%							Higher is better
	Status	B	G	G	G	G	B							

Ref	PRV.1.04	The percentage of HFSV that were deemed to be supporting a dwelling that contained a vulnerable person. This definition is taken from the Home Office guidance note. The target is based on the national average across the sector.
Owner	Prevention	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery Group	

HFSV completion has continued to meet target across Q2, which is positive and demonstrates our continued focus on those most at risk in our communities. Partner referrals remain strong, ensuring we are reaching highly vulnerable individuals, while station staff continue to use vulnerability data to identify and engage those at increased risk of fire. This targeted approach supports our ambition to reduce harm and protect the most vulnerable across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

PRV.2.01 - Number of Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF)

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	< 20%
	Prev 5 year	22.2	23.2	24.2	16.8	17	21.8	22	24	24.8	24	24.2	21.2	G	Within 20%
	2025/2026	27	20	20	30	22	22							A	> 20%
	Status	A	G	G	R	A	G							R	> 30%
Cumulative	Prev 5 year	22.2	45.4	69.6	86.4	103.4	125.2	147.2	171.2	196.0	220.0	244.2	265.4	What is good	
	2025/2026	27	47	67	97	119	141							Less is better	
	Status	A	G	G	G	G	G								

Ref	PRV.2.01	Number of dwelling fires where the cause of the fire was recorded as accidental. Dwelling fires are fires in properties that are a place of residence i.e. places occupied by households such as houses and flats, excluding hotels/ hostels and residential institutions.
Owner	Prevention	
Comparison	Previous five year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery Group	

Average response times to accidental dwelling fires (ADFs) during Q2 remained well within the Service target. A noticeable increase in incidents in July contributed to a slight rise compared with the 5 year average. This reporting period has coincided with an increase in Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) delivery, many of which were carried out following post-incident hot strikes.

All accidental dwelling fires that result in a serious injury feed into our domestic dwelling fire methodology, which helps ensure that our prevention activity and HFSV delivery remain focused across our nine Service Delivery Areas on those at greatest risk of death or serious injury from fire. Quarter 3 will see the rollout of a refreshed targeting methodology that incorporates both incident data and wider datasets to further refine our approach.

PRV.2.03 - ADF Fire-Related Fatalities

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	
	Prev 5 year	0	0	0.4	0	0.2	0.2	0.4	0	0	0	0.2	0.6	G	0
	2025/2026	1	2	0	0	0	0							A	> 0 a year
	Status	A	A	G	G	G	G							R	> 3 a year
Cumulative	Prev 5 year	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.4	2.0	What is good	
	2025/2026	1	3	3	3	3	3							Less is better	
	Status	A	A	A	A	A	A								

Ref	PRV.2.03	Number of fire related fatalities recorded at accidental dwelling fires. In general, 'fire-related deaths' are those that would not have otherwise occurred had there not been a fire.
Owner	Prevention	
Comparison	Previous five year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery Group	

It is pleasing to report that there were no fire-related fatalities during the quarter.

PRV.2.04 - ADF Fire Related Serious Injuries

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	
	Prev 5 year	0.4	0	0.2	0.2	0.6	0	0	0	0.8	0.4	0	0.4	G	< 3 a year
	2025/2026	0	0	0	0	0	1							A	> 2 a year
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	A							R	> 4 a year
Cumulative															
	Prev 5 year	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	2.2	2.6	2.6	3.0	What is good	
	2025/2026	0	0	0	0	0	1							Less is better	
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G								

Ref	PRV.2.04	Number of fire related serious injuries recorded at accidental dwelling fires. In general, 'serious injury' can be defined as: at least an overnight stay in hospital as an in-patient.
Owner	Prevention	
Comparison	Previous five year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery Group	

This is not a trending statistic. This looks to be an isolated event involving expanding foam coming into contact with a hot surface. This incident did not warrant a hot strike.

A Social media campaign will be developed to highlight household product safety labels.

PRV.2.05 - Deliberate Dwelling Fires

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	< 2 per month
	Prev 5 year	1.4	2.4	1.8	1.8	3	0.6	2.8	1.4	0.6	0.8	1.6	1.2	G	2 per month
	2025/2026	3	1	1	0	1	1							A	> 2 per month
	Status	A	B	B	B	B	B							R	> 4 per month
Cumulative															
	Prev 5 year	1.4	3.8	5.6	7.4	10.4	11.0	13.8	15.2	15.8	16.6	18.2	19.4	What is good	
	2025/2026	3	4	5	5	6	7							Less is better	
	Status	A	G	B	B	B	B								

Ref	PRV.2.05	Number of dwelling fires where the fire was started deliberately by someone other than the owner/occupant. This includes derelict properties - derelict are buildings which are unfit for further use.
Owner	Prevention	
Comparison	Previous five year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery Group	

The number of deliberate dwelling fires is consistent with the previous 5 year average. In all cases, an appropriate level of fire investigation was carried out and TVP informed of the deliberate fire.

During this reporting period, we have reviewed and improved our threat of arson procedure with TVP, which aims to improve communication between us as blue light partners of potential risks of arson and allow us to put in place preventative measures.

PRV.3.01 - Deliberate Primary Fires (to other's property)

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B < 10%
	Prev 5 year	13	15	15.2	20.6	19.8	12.8	11.2	8.8	7.6	9	8.4	11.4	G Within 10%
	2025/2026	16	17	22	14	21	7							A > 10%
	Status	R	A	R	B	G	B							R > 20%
Cumulative														
	Prev 5 year	13	28	43	64	84	96	108	116	124	133	141	153	What is good
	2025/2026	16	33	55	69	90	97							Less is better
	Status	R	R	R	G	G	G							

Ref	PRV.3.01	Number of Primary fires that were deliberately started by somebody that wasn't the owner. Primary fires are potentially more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to non-derelict property such as buildings, vehicle or (some) outdoor structures. Prison Fires have been excluded from these numbers.
Owner	Prevention	
Comparison	Previous five year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery Group	

Quarter 2 saw lower-than-average incident numbers, with 16 of the 42 outdoor fires involving grassland, woodland, or crops, and 14 involving vehicles. While no clear patterns or trends have been identified in relation to incident types or locations, we continue to work proactively with partners to share insights, monitor activity and take action against offenders where possible.

Property Level 1	Property Level 2	Incidents	Station Ground	Incidents
Car		8	High Wycombe	7
Van		3	West Ashland	6
Motorcycle		3	Broughton	5
Dwelling	Converted Flat/Maisonette - multiple occupancy	1	Gerrards Cross	5
	Licensed HMO	1	Amersham	4
Non Residential	Other private non-residential building	1	Newport Pagnell	4
	Public admin, security and safety	1	Beaconsfield	3
	Public toilets	1	Great Missenden	3
	Electricity power station	2	Aylesbury	2
Grassland, woodland and crops	Stacked/baled crop (incl manure heap)	3	Marlow	2
	Woodland/forest - broadleaf/hardwood	12	Winslow	1
	Woodland/forest - conifers/softwood	1	Total	42
Other outdoors (including land)	Other outdoor location	1		
Outdoor equipment and machinery	Garden equipment	1		
	Other outdoor equipment/machinery	1		
Outdoor structures	Other outdoor structures	1		
Other		1		
Total		42		

Station Ground	Car	Grassland, woodland and crops	Motorcycle	Van	Total
High Wycombe	2	3		1	6
Amersham		3	1		4
Gerrards Cross	1	2	1		4
Beaconsfield	2	1			3
Broughton	2			1	3
West Ashland	1	1	1		3
Great Missenden		2			2
Marlow		2			2
Newport Pagnell		1		1	2
Winslow		1			1
Total	8	16	3	3	30

PRV.3.02 - Deliberate Secondary Fires (to other's property)

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	< 10%
	Prev 5 year	34	32	40.6	40	45.8	25.2	19.2	18.8	11.8	10.4	15	21.8	G	Within 10%
	2025/2026	55	48	28	33	44	21							A	> 10%
	Status	R	R	B	B	G	G							R	> 20%
Cumulative															
	Prev 5 year	34	66	107	147	192	218	237	256	267	278	293	315	What is good	
	2025/2026	55	103	131	164	208	229							Less is better	
	Status	R	R	R	A	G	G								

Ref	PRV.3.02	Number of secondary fires that were deliberately started by somebody that wasn't the owner. Secondary fires are generally small outdoor fires, not involving people or property. These include refuse fires, grassland fires and fires in derelict buildings or vehicles, unless these fires involved casualties or rescues, or five or more pumping appliances attended.
Owner	Prevention	
Comparison	Previous five year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery Group	

Deliberate secondary fires involving other people's property during Quarter 2 were in line with the previous five-year average. The incidents were varied in type, with trees, grassland, and loose refuse accounting for nearly 50 per cent of all occurrences. 30 of the 98 incidents took place within the West Ashland station area. These insights will be shared with Thames Valley Police and local authority community risk teams to ensure that deliberate fire-setting and anti-social behaviour risks are considered within wider community risk management activity.

Station Ground	Total	Property Level 1	Property Level 2	Total
West Ashland	30	Grassland, woodland and crops	Tree scrub (includes single trees not in garden)	12
Gerrards Cross	15		Grassland, pasture, grazing etc	11
High Wycombe	14		Private/Domestic garden/allotment (vegetation)	5
Aylesbury	9		Hedge	4
Broughton	7		Roadside vegetation	4
Amersham	4		Scrub land	4
Waddesdon	4		Canal/riverbank vegetation	2
Beaconsfield	3		Straw/stubble burning	2
Buckingham	3		Woodland/forest - broadleaf/hardwood	1
Newport Pagnell	3		Woodland/forest - conifers/softwood	1
Great Missenden	2	Non Residential	Other private non-residential building	1
Princes Risborough	2	Other outdoors (including land)	Loose refuse (incl in garden)	15
Marlow	1		Other outdoor location	3
Olney	1		Park	3
Total	98		Cycle path/public footpath/bridleway	2
			Highway/road surface/pavement	2
			Lake/pond/reservoir	1
			Playground (not equipment) or Recreational area	1
		Outdoor structures	Wasteland	1
			Small refuse/rubbish/recycle container (excluding wheelie bin)	8
			Refuse/rubbish tip	6
			Other outdoor items including roadside furniture	4
			Common external bin storage area	2
			Fence	1
			Large refuse/rubbish container (eg skip)	1
			Wheelie Bin	1
		Total		98

PROTECTING PEOPLE FROM RISK IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT



PRT.1.01 - Fire Safety Audits

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	> 70 Per month
	Target	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	G	> 59 Per month
	2025/2026	37	54	43	59	68	53							A	> 49 Per month
	Status	R	A	R	A	G	A							R	< 50 Per month
Cumulative															
	Target	66	132	198	264	330	396	462	528	594	660	726	792	What is good	
	2025/2026	37	91	134	193	261	314							More is better	
	Status	R	R	R	R	A	A								

Ref	PRT.1.01	<div>Number of Fire Safety Audits Completed. A fire safety audit is an examination of the premises and relevant documents to ascertain how the premises are being managed with regards to fire safety. Occupants will need to demonstrate to our officers that they have met the duties required by the Fire Safety Order.</div>
Owner	Protection	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery Group	

Between July and September 2025, Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) completed 180 fire safety audits, compared with 134 in the first quarter (April to June). This represents a 34% increase in audit activity and reflects sustained improvement over the summer period.

Fire safety audits are a core statutory duty under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. They ensure that dutyholders are complying with their legal responsibilities to keep people safe from fire. Our Fire Safety (Protection) officers examine risk assessments, evacuation strategies, fire protection systems, and management arrangements to evaluate how fire safety is maintained in each premises.

This improved performance is a direct result of the Service’s continued investment in staff development. Many of our Protection team are progressing through nationally recognised qualifications, from apprenticeships to a degree in Fire Engineering, and their growing skills and confidence are now translating into higher audit throughput, without compromising on rigour or quality.

Although the cumulative target for Quarter 1 (198 audits) was not met, the consistent progress made in Quarter 2 has narrowed the gap. By the end of September, the team had completed a total of 314 audits against a target of 396. The Service is now well-positioned to increase monthly audit output, supported by the fact that several staff members are expected to become fully qualified in the coming months.

As well as increasing volume, we remain focused on targeting high-risk premises under our Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP). Audit activity continues to be intelligence-led and prioritised to maximise life safety impact.

A Protection Report will be presented to the Full Authority meeting in December 2025, providing assurance on the progress and effectiveness of the ongoing Protection improvement journey.

PRT.3.01 - Non-domestic Property Fires - Accidental

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	< 5 per month
	Prev 5 year	9.8	11	9.2	10.8	11.4	7.4	11.8	10.6	9.4	9.6	9.2	12.0	G	< 11 per month
	2025/2026	12	12	12	15	12	9							A	< 16 per month
	Status	A	A	A	A	A	G							R	=> 16 per month
Cumulative		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	What is good	
	Prev 5 year	9.8	20.8	30.0	40.8	52.2	59.6	71.4	82.0	91.4	101	110	122		
	2025/2026	12	24	36	51	63	72							Less is better	
	Status	A	A	A	A	A	A								

Ref	PRT.3.01	Number of primary fires in non-domestic properties where the cause was recorded as accidental. This excludes derelict properties (unless four or more pumps were needed) and Prisons.
Owner	Protection	
Comparison	Previous five year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery Group	

In Q2 the Service recorded 36 accidental fires in non-domestic properties, matching the number recorded in Q1. Encouragingly, September saw a reduction to single figures for the first time this year.

The incidents were varied in nature, including fires involving sheds, garages, and other non-domestic structures. Where premises were identified as falling within the scope of the Fire Safety Order (FSO), these were assessed and, where appropriate, followed up through fire investigation, audit, or business engagement activity.

Property Level 1	Property Level 2	Total
Car Parks	Other	1
Education	Infant/primary school	1
	Secondary school	1
Entertainment and culture	Club/night club	1
Food and Drink	Other Restaurant/café – not licensed	1
Hospitals and medical care	Hospital	1
Industrial Manufacturing	Assembly	1
	Engineering	2
	Other	1
	Printing	1
Industrial Processing	Recycling	1
Offices and call centres	TV/film/music/art studio	1
Other buildings/use not known		1
Other private non-residential building		1
Private garage		3
Private Garden Shed		4
Public Utilities	Other	1
Retail	Bakery	1
	Petrol station	1
	Shopping Centre	1
	Single shop	2
Vehicle Repair		1
Hostel (e.g. for homeless people)		1
Hotel/motel		1
Other holiday residence (cottage, flat, chalet)		1
Residential Home	Retirement/Elderly	1
Sheltered Housing – not self contained		3
Total		36

PRT.3.02 - Non-domestic Property Fires - Deliberate

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	< 1 per month
	Prev 5 year	2.4	1.6	2.2	2.6	1.8	1.6	1	0.4	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.8	G	< 3 per month
	2025/2026	0	2	1	4	1	0							A	> 2 per month
	Status	B	G	G	A	B	B							R	> 4 per month
Cumulative	Prev 5 year	2.4	4.0	6.2	8.8	10.6	12.2	13.2	13.6	15.2	16.8	18.4	20.2	What is good	
	2025/2026	0	2	3	7	8	8							Less is better	
	Status	B	G	G	G	G	G								

Ref	PRT.3.02	Number of fires in non-domestic properties where the cause was recorded as deliberate (where the fire was started deliberately by someone other than the owner/occupant). This excludes derelict properties (unless four or more pumps were needed) and Prisons.
Owner	Protection	
Comparison	Previous five year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery Group	

In Q2, there were five deliberate fires in non-domestic premises across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, compared with three in Q1. This small increase was largely driven by a spike in July, with numbers returning to low levels in August and zero incidents in September.

PRT.3.07 - Non-domestic Property False Alarms

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	< 10%
	Prev 5 year	114	115	117	121	122	140	147	139	131	120	100	109	G	Within 10%
	2025/2026	62	62	46	65	66	64							A	> 10%
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	B							R	> 20%
Cumulative		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	What is good	
	Prev 5 year	114	229	346	467	589	729	877	1016	1147	1267	1366	1476		
	2025/2026	62	124	170	235	301	365							Less is better	
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	B								

Ref	PRT.3.07	Number of incidents attended in non-domestic properties that were recorded as a False Alarm. These could have been fire related or a special service i.e. flooding. However, this does not include where we attended as a co-responder. These numbers do not include incidents in Prisons.
Owner	Protection	
Comparison	Previous five year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery Group	

The number of false alarms in non-domestic premises rose slightly in Quarter 2, with BFRS recording 195 attendances between July and September, compared to 170 in Quarter 1.

While this represents a modest increase, the overall number of false alarms remains significantly lower, 50% of the five-year average, highlighting the continued effectiveness of the changes introduced in July 2024 to our response to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs). Under this policy, the Service no longer automatically mobilises to AFA activations in low- and medium-risk premises unless specific criteria are met, such as confirmed signs of smoke or fire.

This shift has enabled a more risk-proportionate response model, ensuring that fire engines and firefighters are more readily available for genuine emergencies. Our Protection teams continue to work closely with businesses to reduce unnecessary activations through business engagement activity.

The increase from Quarter 1 is a minor fluctuation within an overall improving trend. We will continue to monitor this area closely in collaboration with dutyholders to sustain progress and further reduce false alarms.

RESPONDING QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY TO EMERGENCIES



RSP.2.01 - Average Attendance Time to all Incidents (exc Co-Res)

	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly	Prev 5 years	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	B < 08:30
	2025/2026	08:54	08:43	08:49	08:52	09:03	08:51						G =< 09:30
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G						A > 09:30
													R > 10:00
YTD	Prev 5 years	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	What is good
	2025/2026	08:54	08:49	08:49	08:50	08:52	08:52						Less is better
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G						

Ref	RSP.2.01	The average attendance time to all incidents (excluding co-responding incidents). The average time is the minutes and seconds elapsed from the time the first appliance was assigned to the incident, to the arrival of the first appliance at the incident.
Owner	Response	
Comparison	Prev 5 year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery	

Attendance times are reviewed monthly via the Service Delivery Group and Performance Board. We also review attendance times by exception following significant incidents.

Our current performance has provided assurance that our 12 immediately available wholtime appliances, meet the day to day demand of incident response.

RSP.2.02 - Average Attendance Time to ADFs

	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly	Prev 5 year	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	B < 08:30
	2025/2026	07:33	07:41	07:42	08:14	08:18	08:50						G =< 09:30
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	G						A > 09:30
													R > 10:00
Cumulative	Prev 5 year	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	What is good
	2025/2026	07:33	07:37	07:38	07:49	07:54	08:03						Less is better
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	B						

Ref	RSP.2.02	The average attendance time to Accidental Dwelling Fires. The average time is the minutes and seconds elapsed from the time the first appliance was assigned to the incident, to the arrival of the first appliance at the incident.
Owner	Response	
Comparison	Previous five year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery	

The slight increase in response times to accidental dwelling fires during September can mostly be attributed to the locations of the incidents. The average time still falls within our response standards however, we will continue to monitor the performance of this measure closely over the next few months to ensure this isn't a trend.

RSP.3.01 - Response Model - All

Day		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	> 12
	2024/2025	12.9	12.9	12.4	12.8	12.3	12.3	12.3	13.4	13.0	14.9	14.1	14.2	G	> 10
	2025/2026	14.2	13.5	13.2	13.3	12.8	13.5							A	=> 9
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	B							R	< 9
Night	2024/2025	13.1	13.2	12.7	13.5	13.6	13.2	13.1	14.5	14.0	16.3	15.5	15.6	What is good	
	2025/2026	15.8	15.3	14.9	14.5	13.7	14.8							Higher is better	
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	B								

Ref	RSP.3.01	The average number of pumps available at the beginning of each shift, broken down by day shift and night shift.
Owner	Response	
Comparison	Previous year	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery	

The territorial Group Commanders work closely with the Resource Management Team and People services to greater understand how absences affect appliance availability.

Equally work is taking place to reduce the reliance on bank shifts and reduce the number of standbys between stations.

Improvements have been made to the operational leave guidance and a review of operational establishments to ensure we have the right people in the right place.

RSP.3.02 - Availability - Wholetime

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	99% - 99.9%	
	2024/2025	97.9%	99.1%	96.7%	97.0%	96.5%	96.2%	96.8%	98.0%	97.5%	99.2%	99.3%	98.5%	G	98% - 98.9%	
	2025/2026	98.9%	97.5%	98.4%	97.0%	96.8%	97.3%							A	96% - 97.9%	
	Status	G	A	G	A	A	A							R	<96%	
Cumulative															What is good	
	2024/2025	97.9%	98.5%	97.9%	97.7%	97.4%	97.2%	97.2%	97.3%	97.3%	97.5%	97.6%	97.7%	Higher is better		
	2025/2026	98.9%	98.2%	98.3%	97.9%	97.7%	97.7%									
	Status	G	G	G	A	A	A									

Ref	RSP.3.02	The availability of BFRS pumps to respond to incidents. This measure reflects when pumps are "on the run". With this in mind, should an appliance be at an incident, it would still be recorded as being available. Reasons for an appliance being "off the run" include, crew/skill deficient, vehicle defects and decontamination.
Owner	Response	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery	

The availability of our wholetime pumps remain above our 2024/2025 performance. However, due to numerous impacts on our staff, such as absence, secondment and training, the availability remained below the target of 98% throughout the quarter.

RSP.3.04 - Bank Shifts

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	< 10%
	2024/2025	197	137	260	202	311	270	224	176	209	40	63	104	G	=< 0%
	2025/2026	163	252	199	293	385	304							A	> 0%
	Status	B	R	B	R	R	R							R	> 10%
Cumulative															
	2024/2025	197	334	594	796	1107	1377	1601	1777	1986	2026	2089	2193	What is good	
	2025/2026	163	415	614	907	1292	1596							Less is better	
	Status	B	R	A	R	R	R								

Ref	RSP.3.04	The number of banks shift utilised per month.
Owner	Response	
Comparison	Previous Year	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery	

The bank shift numbers remain high this quarter.

Impacts on these numbers include a spike in annual leave and a continued level of absence, this was alongside supporting training courses and secondments.

To assist in the requirement to reduce the number of bank shifts, a review has been carried out of the operational leave guidance and adjustments made to change the bank exchange process. While we would expect to see an improvement off the back of these changes during the next few months, we expect to see greater improvements into 2026/2027.

RSP.4.01 - Availability - On-Call

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	=> 25%
	2024/2025	10.6%	9.6%	7.3%	11.2%	10.8%	11.6%	10.8%	13.5%	11.1%	20.9%	18.8%	17.5%	G	=> 15%
	2025/2026	18.5%	17.7%	16.1%	15.5%	11.3%	15.9%							A	=> 10%
	Status	G	G	G	G	A	G							R	< 10%
YTD Avg	2024/2025	10.6%	10.8%	9.15%	9.7%	9.9%	10.2%	10.3%	10.7%	10.7%	11.8%	12.3%	12.8%	What is good	
	2025/2026	18.5%	18.1%	17.4%	16.9%	15.8%	15.8%							Higher is better	
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G								

What is good

Higher is better

Ref	RSP.4.01	The availability of BFRS pumps to respond to incidents. This measure reflects when pumps are "on the run". With this in mind, should an appliance be at an incident, it would still be recorded as being available. Reasons for an appliance being "off the run" include, crew/skill deficient, vehicle defects and decontamination.
Owner	Response	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery	

Whilst we continue to see an improving trend of availability in comparison to 2024/2025, 16% availability across 18 appliances does not represent a good level of resilience or value for money.

Service Delivery management are working closely to make BAU improvements with our current staffing pool.

The On-Call working group has been reestablished to identify and improve all local elements within our current establishment. This has already seen the completion of a full contract review, identifying more appropriate and realistic declarations of availability. The group is now focused on training and retention of our current staff, as well as the ability to offer a better tiered availability.

An on call improvement programme has been established to identify more fundamental change and improvement to meet the requirements of the CRMP.

RSP.4.02 - Availability - On-Call - Immediately Available

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	=> 20%
	2024/2025	5.9%	5.6%	3.5%	6.3%	5.5%	5.2%	6.3%	9.0%	7.0%	14.3%	11.7%	9.7%	G	=> 10%
	2025/2026	11.6%	10.9%	9.9%	8.7%	6.9%	8.9%							A	=> 5%
	Status	G	G	A	A	A	A							R	< 5%
Cumulative	2024/2025	5.9%	5.7%	5.0%	5.3%	5.4%	5.3%	5.5%	5.9%	6.0%	6.9%	7.3%	7.5%	What is good	
	2025/2026	11.6%	11.2%	10.8%	10.3%	9.6%	9.5%							Higher is better	
	Status	G	G	G	G	A	A								

What is good

Higher is better

Ref	RSP.4.02	The availability of BFRS On-Call pumps to respond to incidents. This measure reflects when pumps are "on the run", but does not include when the pump is available with a slower response time (i.e. excludes 2nd, 3rd and 4th line). Reasons for an appliance being "off the run" include, crew/skill deficient, vehicle defects and decontamination.
Owner	Response	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery	

Immediate On-Call availability presents a challenging picture, which is currently being addressed by the On-Call improvement programme.

We will continue to address the immediately available On-Call pumps via local management with our current staff, governed by the Service Delivery Group.

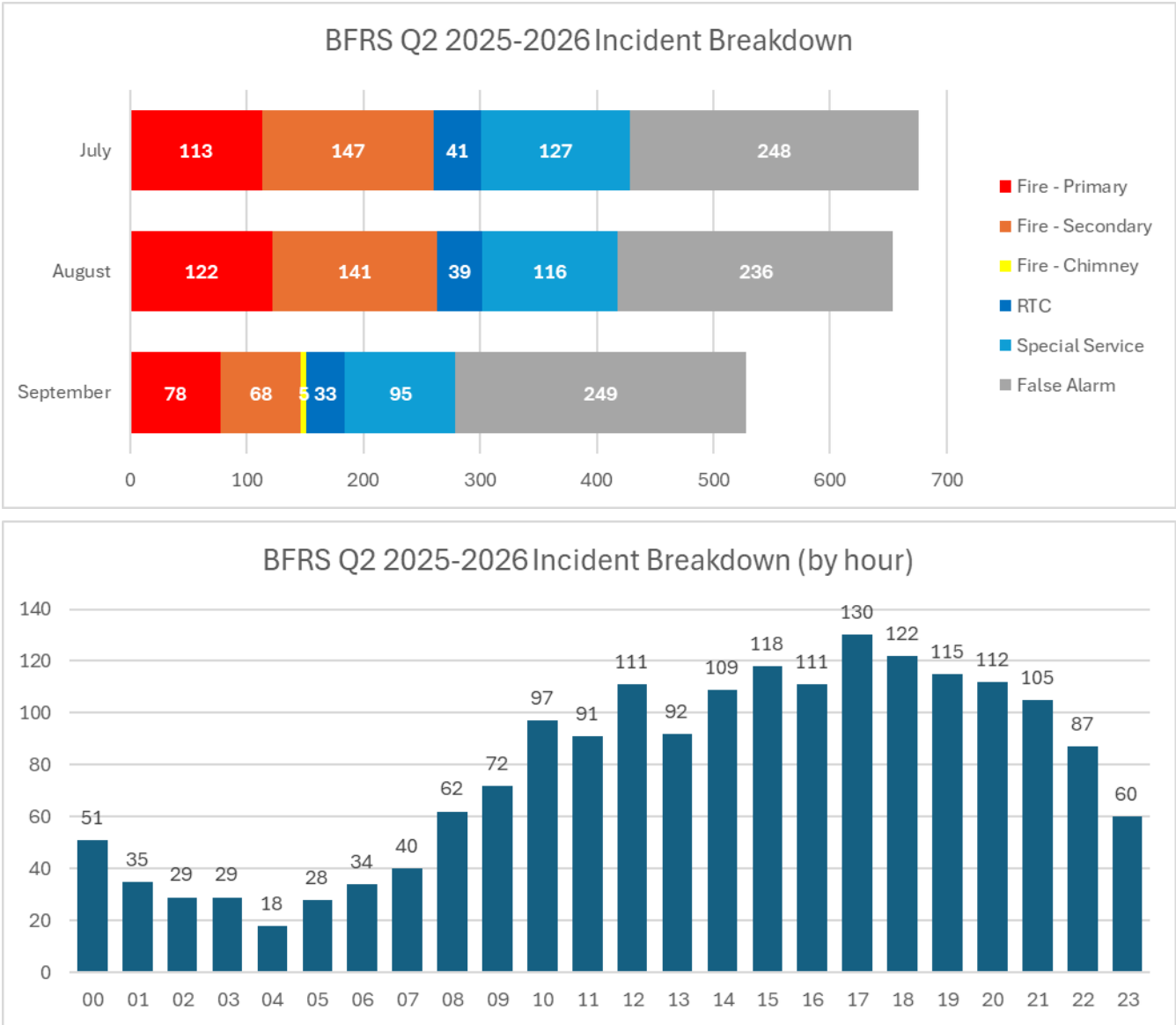
RSP.7.01 - Total Incidents (exc co-responders)

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B < 2.51%
	Prev 5 year	562	575	604	652	652	619	607	573	551	555	480	502	G Within 2.5%
	2025/2026	566	534	559	676	654	528							A > 2.51%
	Status	G	B	B	A	G	B							R > 10%
Cumulative														
	Prev 5 year	562	1137	1741	2393	3045	3664	4272	4844	5395	5951	6431	6933	What is good
	2025/2026	566	1100	1659	2335	2989	3517							Monitor
	Status	G	B	B	G	G	B							

Ref	RSP.7.01	Total number of incidents attended within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (excluding co-responder incidents).
Owner	Response	
Comparison	Previous five year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery	

Incidents during Q2 remained on season trend across most types of incident. However, we have seen a noticeable decrease in the number of serious RTCs that we have attended during this period.

A breakdown of the incident type and time of incident can be seen below.



RSP.7.02 - OTB Mobilisations into BFRS Grounds

Monthly

	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Prev 5 year	129	131	151	201	195	150	149	132	138	117	114	117
2025/2026	132	133	156	242	196	146						
Status	G	G	G	R	G	G						

B	< 10%
G	Within 10%
A	> 10%
R	> 20%

Cumulative

	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Prev 5 year	129	260	410	611	807	957	1106	1238	1376	1493	1606	1723
2025/2026	132	265	421	663	859	1005						
Status	G	G	G	G	G	G						

What is good
Less is better

Ref	RSP.7.02	Number of mobilisations of appliance from Over The Border (OTB) into BFRS grounds.
Owner	Response	
Comparison	Previous five year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery	

Below is breakdown of Q2 2025-2026 Mobilisations into Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes from other Fire and Rescue Services.

Service	Appliances Assigned	Time unavailable
Berkshire	287	220:08:44
Oxfordshire	112	146:37:18
Bedfordshire	73	49:47:39
Hertfordshire	51	18:52:10
London	34	9:25:30
Northamptonshire	20	9:36:22
Surrey	7	5:24:52
Total	584	459:52:35

Station Ground	Appliances Assigned	Time Unavailable
Gerrards Cross	222	162:07:38
Beaconsfield	76	50:37:02
Aylesbury	57	28:08:06
Brill	42	72:17:12
West Ashland	32	19:41:07
Olney	19	6:48:33
High Wycombe	19	9:43:54
Buckingham	18	20:10:41
Broughton	17	10:09:01
Waddesdon	12	18:53:54
Haddenham	12	8:12:03
Newport Pagnell	11	8:28:45
Chesham	10	5:38:57
Amersham	9	5:59:20
Princes Risborough	7	6:35:09
Winslow	6	8:52:56
Great Missenden	5	10:39:40
Stokenchurch	5	3:33:54
Marlow	5	3:14:43
Total	584	459:52:35

Incident type - at time of call	Appliances Assigned	Time unavailable	Average time unavailable
ALARM - INDUSTRIAL / COMMERCIAL	4	1:35:22	0:23:50
ALARM - RETAIL / PUBLIC ASSEMBLY	12	2:38:05	0:13:10
ALARM - RESIDENTIAL	20	4:39:56	0:14:00
ALARM - SMOKE ALARM ACT	5	1:27:55	0:17:35
ALARM - CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM ACT	3	0:54:24	0:18:08
FIRE - INDUSTRIAL / COMMERCIAL	6	8:46:50	1:27:48
FIRE - FIRE UNKNOWN ORIGIN	3	2:59:56	0:59:59
FIRE - SMOKE IN THE AREA	10	4:31:43	0:27:10
FIRE - RETAIL/ PUBLIC ASSEMBLY	12	3:23:24	0:16:57
FIRE - SCHOOL/COLLEGE	3	0:40:29	0:13:30
FIRE - RESIDENTIAL	12	2:39:18	0:13:16
FIRE - PERSONS REPORTED RESIDENTIAL	1	0:32:09	0:32:09
FIRE - HIGHRISE	13	3:59:37	0:18:26
FIRE - HOSPITALS	2	0:13:34	0:06:47
FIRE - PRISONS / DETENTION / SECURE ACCOM	10	2:15:43	0:13:34
FIRE - DOMESTIC	28	31:09:29	1:06:46
FIRE - PERSONS REPORTED DOMESTIC	25	9:49:13	0:23:34
FIRE - CHIMNEY	1	2:18:55	2:18:55
FIRE - AGRICULTURAL	1	0:42:50	0:42:50
FIRE - OTHER BUILDINGS	12	13:48:01	1:09:00
FIRE - DERELICT BUILDINGS	2	1:25:38	0:42:49
FIRE - CARAVAN / CAMPING	4	5:31:58	1:23:00
FIRE - PERSONS REPORTED CARAVAN / CAMPING	9	24:58:15	2:46:28
FIRE - FIRE IN THE OPEN	105	110:08:55	1:02:57
FIRE - IN THE OPEN LARGE	9	15:42:25	1:44:43
FIRE - RECYCLING / LANDFILL	6	17:07:54	2:51:19
FIRE - FIELD	56	50:19:48	0:53:55
FIRE - ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION	4	4:00:35	1:00:09
HAZMAT - GAS / RELEASE / LEAKS	4	0:59:21	0:14:50
HAZMAT - SMALL	6	3:00:14	0:30:02
MOBILISING - STANDBY	19	24:29:29	1:17:20
RESCUE - RESCUE FROM HEIGHTS	1	0:06:00	0:06:00
RESCUE - RESCUE FROM WATER	5	1:20:03	0:16:01
RESCUE - RESCUE OF SMALL ANIMALS	3	2:03:51	0:41:17
RESCUE - RESCUE OF LARGE ANIMALS	4	2:20:51	0:35:13
SPECIAL SERVICE - RELEASE	4	2:24:50	0:36:13
SPECIAL SERVICE - PERSON SHUT IN LIFT	13	5:01:42	0:23:12
SPECIAL SERVICE - PERSON(S) LOCKED IN	5	1:01:23	0:12:17
SPECIAL SERVICE - PERSON(S) LOCKED OUT	1	0:15:51	0:15:51
SPECIAL SERVICE - ATTEMPTED SUICIDE	1	0:56:18	0:56:18
SPECIAL SERVICE - INTERNAL FLOODING	3	2:33:31	0:51:10
TRANSPORT - RTC PERSONS TRAPPED SMALL VE	28	19:38:19	0:42:05
TRANSPORT - RTC PERSONS TRAPPED LARGE VE	1	0:46:41	0:46:41
TRANSPORT - RTC PERSONS TRAPPED FIRE SMA	1	1:30:06	1:30:06
TRANSPORT - RTC SCENE SAFETY	12	9:00:49	0:45:04
TRANSPORT - AIRCRAFT LIGHT	3	1:03:09	0:21:03
TRANSPORT - BOAT ON FIRE	1	0:43:49	0:43:49
TRANSPORT - SMALL VEHICLE ON FIRE	72	39:35:18	0:32:59
TRANSPORT - LARGE VEHICLE ON FIRE	19	12:38:39	0:39:56

RSP.7.03 - OTB Mobilisations out of BFRS Grounds

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	< 10%
	Prev 5 year	36	50	41	54	53	40	49	39	45	39	32	36	G	Within 10%
	2025/2026	58	84	88	69	70	67							A	> 10%
	Status	R	R	R	R	R	R							R	> 20%
Cumulative														What is good	
	Prev 5 year	36	86	127	181	234	274	323	362	407	445	478	514	Within range is better	
	2025/2026	58	142	230	299	369	436								
	Status	R	R	R	R	R	R								

Ref	RSP.7.03	Number of mobilisations of appliance from BFRS into Over The Border (OTB) grounds.
Owner	Response	
Comparison	Previous five year average	
Delivery Group	Service Delivery	

Below is breakdown of where BFRS supported other Fire and Rescue Services with incidents outside of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, during Q2 2025-2026.

Station	Wholetime/ On-Call	Appliance Type	Appliances Assigned	Time Unavailable	Service	Appliances Assigned	Time Unavailable
Broughton	WT	Pump	13	7:12:43	Berkshire	64	33:32:19
Broughton	OC	Pump	1	0:29:36	Oxfordshire	57	53:11:47
Newport Pagnell	WT	Pump	3	1:24:34	Bedfordshire	35	29:46:26
West Ashland	WT	Special	3	9:34:29	Northamptonshire	25	22:53:57
West Ashland	WT	Pump	20	13:54:03	Hertfordshire	18	12:31:49
West Ashland	WT	Pump	6	5:58:15	London	7	3:57:29
Aylesbury	WT	Pump	24	17:29:24	Total	206	155:53:46
Aylesbury	WT	Pump	4	3:26:07			
Buckingham	WT	Pump	21	14:51:45			
Brill	OC	Pump	3	1:30:23			
Waddesdon	OC	Pump	1	0:18:03			
Aylesbury (USAR)	WT	USAR	1	1:41:57			
Aylesbury (USAR)	WT	USAR	1	3:17:44			
Aylesbury (USAR)	WT	USAR	3	0:35:43			
Amersham	WT	Pump	4	1:31:55			
Chesham	OC	Special	1	1:05:06			
High Wycombe	WT	Aerial	8	3:21:11			
High Wycombe	WT	Special	2	2:21:09			
High Wycombe	WT	Pump	25	23:36:14			
High Wycombe	WT	Pump	17	13:16:04			
Princes Risborough	OC	Pump	1	0:13:23			
Princes Risborough	OC	Special	4	5:34:20			
Marlow	OC	Pump	2	1:38:41			
Marlow	OC	Special	1	0:27:10			
Beaconsfield	WT	Pump	16	8:07:03			
Beaconsfield	WT	Boat	1	2:54:45			
Gerrards Cross	WT	Pump	20	10:01:59			
Total			206	155:53:46			

AN INCLUSIVE, HEALTHY AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE



PPL.1.01 - Actual vs Establishment - Wholetime

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	>100%
	Target	301	301	301	301	301	301	301	301	301	301	301	301	G	> 94.9%
	2025/2026	314	312	310	310	307	310							A	< 95%
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	B							R	< 90%
Average YTD														What is good	
	Target	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Closer to Target	
	2025/2026	104%	104%	104%	103%	103%	103%								
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	B								

Ref	PPL.1.01	Total number of people in Wholetime roles v's budgeted establishment as at the last day of the month.
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

Throughout quarter two, we've have completed the Wholetime Firefighter Campaign and the successful applicants— our new Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices - commenced employment on 22 September 2025 and will be undertaking their in-house training until Monday 13th October and then move onto their training at Fire Service College. This cohort includes one internal candidate from the Prevention team and two On Call employees, reflecting our commitment to internal development and career progression. This recruitment outcome is fully aligned with our workforce planning, onboarding a cohort of six allows us to maintain operational strength while preserving flexibility for future workforce adjustments.

As of September, our projected monthly wholetime leaver rate has increased from 0.9 to 1.2. We have had two Wholetime employees leave this month, one Firefighter and one Crew Commander. There has also been one Firefighter transfer over to a Support role.

Looking ahead, we are planning a Transferee intake for 2027. However, we will continue to monitor workforce data on a monthly basis to inform decision-making and ensure our recruitment strategy remains responsive and robust. Any further Operational recruitment will be carefully evaluated in line with evolving organisational needs.

Role	Head Count
Senior Management	3 (1 Temp)
Area Commander	2
Group Commander	7 (1 Temp)
Station Commander	20 (1 SC on secondment)
Watch Commander	44
Crew Commander	53
Firefighter	181 (inc 2 FF on secondment & 1 FF on sabbatical)
Total establishment	310

PPL.1.02 - Actual vs Establishment - On-Call

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	> 95%
	Target	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	G	> 89.9%
	2025/2026	60.0	59.8	60.8	59.7	59.5	55.7							A	< 90%
	Status	R	R	R	R	R	R							R	< 85%
Average YTD														What is good	
	Target	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%		
	2025/2026	62.%	62%	63%	63%	62%	62%							Closer to Target	
	Status	R	R	R	R	R	R								

Ref	PPL.1.02	Total number of people in On-Call roles v's budgeted establishment (FTE) as at the last day of the month.
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

While the budgeted Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) for On-Call stations is 96, it is important to note that this figure does not directly equate to headcount. As highlighted by HR and Finance, a single FTE may be fulfilled by multiple individuals, reflecting the flexible nature of On-Call contracts.

Since the last quarter, we opened up our On-Call Firefighter recruitment campaign which went live on 1 September 2025. Once the campaign closes, the HR Team will work closely with the On Call Managers to progress the applications through the recruitment process. Importantly, we are not placing a cap on the number of recruits from this campaign. Instead, we are adopting a phased approach to onboarding, allowing us to keep candidates engaged with ‘Welcome/Brew with a Crew evenings’ and bring them in gradually throughout the year. These initiatives support continuous progress toward our establishment targets while ensuring operational readiness and integration at station level.

The September FTE figures were shaped by several key changes including current employees increasing or decreasing their hours of availability and current Wholetime employees taking on new On Call contracts, alongside their Wholetime roles.

Our On-Call workforce comprises of 55.5 Full Time Equivalents (FTE), represented by a total of 121 individual employees. Of these, 52 employees are dual contract, serving as both Wholetime and On-call in Bucks. This accounts for 43% of the total On-Call workforce.

In addition, we have 8 employees who are Wholetime with us and doing On-Call in another Service. These Services are; Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Bedfordshire.

PPL.1.03 - Actual vs Establishment - Support

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	>100%
	Target	133.1	135.1	135.1	137.1	137.1	137.1							G	> 94.9%
	2025/2026	128.3	128.3	130.3	131.3	130.9	128.1							A	< 95%
	Status	G	A	G	G	G	A							R	< 90%
%															
	Target	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	What is good	
	2025/2026	96.4%	95.7%	95.9%	95.9%	95.8%	95.4%							Closer to Target	
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G								

Ref	PPL.1.03	Total number of people in Support roles v's budgeted establishment as at the last day of the month.
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

The table below presents the current status of our support establishment over the last quarter, comparing targeted versus actual Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) figures.

Month	Target	FTE
July	137.11	131.25
	2 x People Business Partner	
August	137.11	130.92
	No change	
September	137.11	128.13
	No change	

Key Movements:

Support Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) levels continue to demonstrate month-on-month variation, reflecting the dynamic nature of our workforce and the ongoing evolution of staffing arrangements across the Organisation. These fluctuations are influenced by a range of factors, including employee turnover, internal role changes, and adjustments to individual working patterns.

During this quarter, we recorded the departure of five support employees, each leaving for a variety of reasons such as career progression, retirement, or personal circumstances. In parallel, six new support employees have joined the Organisation, contributing fresh skills and perspectives to our teams. These new starters are being integrated into their respective departments, with onboarding plans tailored to support a smooth transition and early contribution to service delivery.

In addition to these changes in headcount, other variances in the reported FTE figures stem from existing employees modifying their contracted hours. This includes individuals opting to reduce their working hours to accommodate flexible working arrangements, as well as others increasing their hours in response to operational needs or personal preference. Such adjustments are a natural part of our commitment to supporting a flexible and responsive working environment.

The targeted FTE figure for 2025/26 encompasses both budgeted and temporary positions, with the latter playing a critical role in enabling departments to manage increased workloads and deliver priority projects within required timeframes. Where possible, we aim to recruit into roles ahead of planned leavers, allowing for a comprehensive and effective handover process. Recent months have seen a high volume of recruitment activity, with the majority of vacancies successfully filled, contributing to a more resilient workforce. FTE levels also fluctuate due to existing employees adjusting their contracted hours, either increasing or decreasing their FTE hours.

These movements reflect ongoing efforts to align resources with service demands. While overall FTE remains below the target, staffing levels are closely monitored to ensure continuity and quality of service delivery.

The HR Operations team continues to collaborate closely with managers, providing support throughout recruitment campaigns to ensure we attract and appoint the most suitable candidates for each role.

PPL.1.04 - Staff Turnover

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	
	Target	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	G	<= 1% per month
	2025/2026	1.4%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.8%							A	> 1% per month
	Status	A	G	G	G	G	G							R	> 1.9% per month
YTD															
	Target	< 1%	< 2%	< 3%	< 4%	< 5%	< 6%	< 7%	< 8%	< 9%	<10%	<11%	<12%	What is good	
	2025/2026	1.4%	2%	2.6%	3.2%	3.8%	4.6%							Less is better	
	Status	A	G	G	G	G	G								

Ref	PPL.1.04	Percentage of employees who leave the Service, expressed as a percentage of the total workforce.
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

During the second quarter of the financial year, the organisation recorded a total of eleven employee leavers. This comprised of two operational and three support employees who resigned, and four operational and two support employees who retired. These movements reflect the natural ebb and flow of workforce dynamics and are consistent with anticipated patterns for this period.

While we continue to monitor our monthly leaver rate as part of broader workforce planning efforts, overall turnover remains within acceptable and manageable thresholds. The organisation remains committed to maintaining service continuity and operational resilience through proactive planning and strategic resourcing. To support this, we are working closely with managers across departments to identify potential risks and required recruitment interventions. These include succession/workforce planning, with early recruitment to enable effective handovers, and ongoing engagement initiatives to support employee satisfaction and career development.

Our approach ensures that staffing levels are aligned with service needs, and that we remain agile in responding to changes within our workforce. By maintaining a focus on retention and forward planning, we aim to safeguard organisational stability and deliver consistent, high-quality service outcomes.

PPL.2.05 - Maintenance of Operational Skills - WT

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	> 10% per month
	Target	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	G	> 7.99% per month
	2025/2026	4.2%	10.7%	11.9%	11.4%	4.3%	7.3%							A	< 8% per month
	Status	R	B	B	B	R	A							R	< 6% per month
Cumulative														What is good	
	Target	8%	16%	24%	32%	40%	48%	56%	64%	72%	80%	88%	96%	Higher is better	
	2025/2026	4.2%	14.9%	26.8%	38.2%	42.5%	49.8%								
	Status	R	A	G	G	G	G								

Ref	R3.01	Progress against maintenance of operational skills by wholetime firefighters and supervisory managers.
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

During quarter 2 of 2025/26, progress in maintenance of operational skills (MOS) among wholetime firefighters showed steady performance with cumulative results indicating steady growth, which aligned with targets.

Performance in the month of July was exceptionally high, with the completion rate of 11.4% well above the target of 10% and continuing the good results experienced at the end of Q1. This boosted cumulative progress, surpassing the 32% cumulative target to reach 38.1%.

August experienced a sharp decline to 4.3%, placing it in the red category. Despite this dip, the cumulative figure remained strong at 42.5%, suggesting that prior gains helped buffer the impact.

A modest rebound in September to 7.3% brought performance up just below the target of 8%. Cumulative progress continued to improve to 49.8%, keeping it ahead of the 48% target. This figure is slightly lower than the previous year at this stage (51% in 2024).

The cumulative performance remains on track, consistently above target throughout Q2. Despite the underperformance in August, overall quarterly results reflect successful retention of progress due to a strong July and acceptable September performance. The fluctuation in monthly performance is reflective of the peak annual leave period for wholetime firefighters, as well as the training staff who were not available during this period for station training visits.

Looking forward, training staff are already conducting scheduled station training visits which will supplement the regular monthly training plans for every station. The Training Assurance Manager has disseminated the Q2 report to all operational staff and distributed individual watch/ department reports to each of the station commanders for audit and review.

PPL.2.07 - Mandatory E-Learning

Wholetime

	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Target	11%	22%	33%	44%	55%	66%	77%	88%	95%	95%	95%	95%
2025/2026	43%	46%	48%	65%	68%	69%						
Status	B	B	B	B	B	B						

B	> Target
G	< 0 - 9.9 %
A	< 10 - 19.9 %
R	< 20%

Support

	8%	16%	24%	40%	56%	72%	80%	88%	95%	95%	95%	95%
Target	8%	16%	24%	40%	56%	72%	80%	88%	95%	95%	95%	95%
2025/2026	33%	34%	41%	56%	61%	62%						
Status	B	B	B	B	B	A						

What is good
Higher is better

Ref	PPL.2.07	All BFRS staff are required to complete a number of mandatory e-learning packages every year. These packages cover three main subjects across Health & Safety, Equality Diversity & Inclusion and Data Protection. Within the subjects, there are packages such as Safety Event Reporting, ED&I in the Workplace and Responsible for Information.
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

While there was a slight increase of completion over the period, there is a need for Support staff to focus on completion of the Q2 packages, as the KPI for September is 72%. Throughout September, comms will be sent to all support staff managers to highlight this.

Throughout Q3, the focus for eLearning is on Data Protection. Throughout Q3, Safeguarding and Prevent training will be reviewed with a view to be included in the mandatory eLearning packages for all staff and reports will be generated to allow managers to track their teams completion of this package.

PPL.3.01 - Appraisal Completion

Appraisals

	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Target	30%	60%	90%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
2024/2025	71%	79%	87%	90%	92%	95%						
Status	B	B	A	A	A	B						

B	>10% of target or 95%
G	=> 0% of Target
A	< 0% of target
R	< 10% of target

Ref	PPL.3.01	The percentage of all staff that have received their 2024/2025 end of year review.
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

What is good
Higher is better

As of the end of September, returns have increased to 95% vs last month, 92%. A final push for returns has resulting us achieving the target.

Monthly reports continue to be generated to provide managers with a clear indication of where our gaps in appraisal returns are. These reports also detail the % return vs the KPI so they are aware of how the Service is performing against the target. Training continues to be provided to support completion with further training has been scheduled throughout September and October to ensure we are working to overcome any barriers to appraisal facilitation and completion.

The internally developed Thrive Leadership Programme will focus on the ability of our leaders to have better quality and more curious conversations using tools like GROW and coaching techniques. One of the moments where this is evident is within 1:1 meetings, daily conversations and also specifically documented within an appraisal conversation which will be covered in Module 3. We expect that the quality and confidence of the conversation that supports the documentation of this process will improve and that the individuals being assessed are more motivated and feel valued as a result.

PPL.3.02 - Objectives & Half Year Review

Objectives

	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Target	30%	60%	90%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
2025/2026	32%	47%	82%	89%	93%	96%						
Status	G	R	A	A	A	B						

B	>10% of target or 95%
G	=> 0% of Target
A	< 0% of target
R	< 10% of target

Review

	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Target	-	-	-	-	-	25%	50%	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%
2025/2026	-	-	-	-	-	35%						
Status	-	-	-	-	-	G						

What is good
Higher is better

Ref	PPL.3.02	The percentage of all staff that have received their 2025/2026 Objectives, and have then had their half year review.
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

As of the end of September, objective setting returns have increased to 96% vs last month, 93%. A final push for returns has resulting us achieving the target.

As of this month, we are now reporting on the returns for half year reviews, this month exceeding our target of 25% and an excellent return rate for the first month of reporting.

Monthly reports continue to be generated to provide managers with a clear indication of where our gaps in appraisal returns are. These reports also detail the % return vs the KPI so they are aware of how the Service is performing against the target. Training continues to be provided to support completion with further training has been scheduled throughout September and October to ensure we are working to overcome any barriers to appraisal facilitation and completion.

The internally developed Thrive Leadership Programme will focus on the ability of our leaders to have better quality and more curious conversations using tools like GROW and coaching techniques. One of the moments where this is evident is within 1:1 meetings, daily conversations and also specifically documented within an appraisal conversation which will be covered in Module 3. We expect that the quality and confidence of the conversation that supports the documentation of this process will improve and that the individuals being assessed are more motivated and feel valued as a result.

PPL.4.01 - Absence - Wholetime Staff

Count		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	< 20%
	Target	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	G	=< 0%
	2025/2026	40	60	29	39	36	33							A	> 0%
	Status	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	R	> 10%
Shifts														What is good	
	Target	297	295	293	293	291	293							Less is better	
	2025/2026	283	360	210	269	266	265								
	Status	G	R	B	G	G	G								

Ref	PPL.4.01	The number of occasions wholetime employees are absent due to sickness and number of working days lost per month due to sickness. This covers short and long-term sickness. The target is based on the national average of days/shifts recorded per WT FF across 2024-25. This does not account for seasonal trends.
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

Quarter 2 Overview: Absence levels—both in terms of frequency and total days lost—remained within acceptable parameters, with the exception of a notable spike in May, which was due to a large number of gastroenteritis cases.

Long-Term Sickness Absence: During Quarter 2, the number of ongoing long-term sickness cases rose steadily: from seven in July, to nine in August, and reaching 14 in September. Although September recorded the highest number of cases, six of these were resolved within the same month.

The top reasons for long-term sickness absence within Quarter 2 was musculoskeletal injuries, followed by mental-health – stress (work related). Whilst the majority of musculoskeletal cases are ongoing and continue to be managed under the Service's Attendance Management Procedure, all cases of mental-health – stress have concluded.

Short-Term Sickness Absence: The number of working days lost due to short-term sickness cases steadily decreased throughout Quarter 2; from 140 days in July, to 137 days in August and down to 94 days in September.

Short-term sickness cases showed a downward trend throughout Quarter 2, decreasing from 30 in July to 27 in August, and further to 19 in September. Most of these absences were self-certified and lasted fewer than seven days.

The top reasons for short-term sickness absences within Quarter 2 was gastroenteritis / sickness / diarrhoea / abdominal pain, followed by musculoskeletal injuries.

Emerging Trends: Across both long-term and short-term sickness absence cases, musculoskeletal issues have emerged as a recurring cause. The People team is investigating this trend and exploring targeted training and resources to better support employees affected by such conditions.

The CIPD Biennial Report on Health and Wellbeing at Work, published 09 September 2025 (which provides benchmarking data and analysis on current and emerging health and wellbeing trends and practices) reported a sharp increase in sickness absence, currently being the highest in more than 15 years. The most common causes of absence for short-term was minor illness, e.g. cold/flu, headache, mental ill health, stress and musculoskeletal injuries and for long-term was mental ill health, musculoskeletal, long-term ill health conditions, e.g. neurological, respiratory conditions, cancer and stress.

The report stated the most common interventions include access to counselling, phased returns to work and access to an Employee Assistance Programme. All of these are provided by the Service. What we are looking at in addition is more targeted interventions, such as sessions on musculoskeletal, training and toolkits for managers in spotting the signs of mental ill health and having sensitive conversations.

Ongoing Focus and Support: Efforts to manage sickness absence continue to be a priority, with regular governance reviews by the People Delivery group aimed at driving consistent reductions. Additionally, wellbeing initiatives—including promotional events, resources, and training opportunities—will be made available to help employees access support and adopt healthier lifestyle choices.

Absences are handled at local level, with the People team assisting line managers to ensure support is given to absence case management. Key priorities include closing absence records to maintain accurate data, conducting return-to-work meetings, and continuous monitoring.

During the autumn and winter months, short-term sickness absence due to cold and flu typically increases. To help protect employees against the most common flu viruses, the Service's Occupational Health provider will be running flu vaccination clinics during October and November. These clinics offer flu jabs to employees who wish to take advantage of this health benefit.

PPL.4.03 - Absence - On-Call Staff

Count		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	< 20%
	Target	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	G	=< 0%
	2025/2026	10	13	8	11	11	12							A	> 0%
	Status	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	R	> 10%
Days														What is good	
	Target	169	167	169	169	169	169							Less is better	
	2025/2026	112	183	136	209	252	242								
	Status	B	A	G	R	R	R								

Ref	PPL.4.03	The number of occasions OC employees are absent due to sickness and calendar days (not shifts) lost per month due to sickness. This covers short and long-term sickness. The target is based on the national average of days/shifts recorded per OC FF across 2024-25. This does not account for seasonal trends.
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

Long-Term Sickness Absence: During Quarter 2, the number of ongoing long-term sickness absences cases rose steadily; from five in July and August to seven in September. A number of these cases have been absent for a significant period and are being appropriately managed through the Service’s Attendance Management Procedure.

The top reasons for long-term sickness absence within Quarter 2 was musculoskeletal injuries. Cases continue to be appropriately managed under the Service’s Attendance Management Procedure, in conjunction with Occupational Health advice.

Short-Term Sickness Absence: The number of working days lost due to short-term sickness cases fluctuated throughout Quarter 2, increasing from 64 days in July, to 97 days in August and down to 44 days in September. Decreasing from six reported cases in July and August to five in September. Most of these absences were self-certified and lasted fewer than seven days.

The top reasons for short-term sickness absence within Quarter 2 was ear/nose/throat issues, followed by gastroenteritis/sickness/diarrhoea/abdominal pain and musculoskeletal injuries.

Emerging Trends: For long-term sickness absence cases, musculoskeletal issues have emerged as a recurring cause. The People team is investigating this trend and exploring targeted training and resources to better support employees affected by such conditions.

The CIPD Biennial Report on Health and Wellbeing at Work, published 09 September 2025 (which provides benchmarking data and analysis on current and emerging health and wellbeing trends and practices) reported a sharp increase in sickness absence, currently being the highest in more than 15 years. The most common causes of absence for short-term was minor illness, e.g. cold/flu, headache, mental ill health, stress and musculoskeletal injuries and for long-term was mental ill health, musculoskeletal, long-term ill health conditions, e.g. neurological, respiratory conditions, cancer and stress.

The report stated the most common interventions include access to counselling, phased returns to work and access to an Employee Assistance Programme. All of these are provided by the Service. What we are looking at in addition is more targeted interventions, such as sessions on musculoskeletal, training and toolkits for managers in spotting the signs of mental ill health and having sensitive conversations.

PPL.4.05 - Absence - Support Staff

Count		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	< 20%
	Target	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	G	=< 0%
	2025/2026	14	19	14	17	22	17							A	> 0%
	Status	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	R	> 10%
Shifts														What is good	
	Target	103	103	105	105	105	103							Less is better	
	2025/2026	122	117	58	44	88	77								
	Status	R	R	B	B	G	B								

Ref	PPL.4.05	The number of occasions SS employees are absent due to sickness and working days (shifts) lost per month due to sickness. This covers short and long-term sickness. The target is based on the national average of days/shifts recorded per FTE across 2024-25. This does not account for seasonal trends.
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

Quarter 2 Overview: Absence levels—both in terms of frequency and total days lost—generally remained within acceptable limits. However, April and May saw a noticeable increase, primarily driven by a combination of post-operative recovery and mental health-related absences. Additionally, an issue was identified where the non-closure of employee absence records contributed to inflated overall absence figures.

Long-Term Sickness Absence: During Quarter 2, the number of ongoing long-term sickness absences cases rose steadily; from zero in July, to two in August and September. The top reason for long-term sickness absence within Quarter 2 was post-operative recovery.

Short-Term Sickness Absence: The number of working days lost due to short-term sickness cases fluctuated throughout Quarter 2, increasing from 40 days in July, to 49 days in August and down to 47 days in September. The number of reported cases fluctuated from 16 cases in July, to 20 in August to 15 in September. Most of these absences were self-certified and lasted fewer than seven days. The top reasons for short-term sickness absence within Quarter 2 was gastroenteritis / sickness / diarrhoea / abdominal pain, followed by cold/cough/influenza.

Emerging Trends: There are no trends for long-term and short-term sickness absences.

The CIPD Biennial Report on Health and Wellbeing at Work, published 09 September 2025 (which provides benchmarking data and analysis on current and emerging health and wellbeing trends and practices) reported a sharp increase in sickness absence, currently being the highest in more than 15 years. The most common causes of absence for short-term was minor illness, e.g. cold/flu, headache, mental ill health, stress and musculoskeletal injuries and for long-term was mental ill health, musculoskeletal, long-term ill health conditions, e.g. neurological, respiratory conditions, cancer and stress.

The report stated the most common interventions include access to counselling, phased returns to work and access to an Employee Assistance Programme. All of these are provided by the Service. What we are looking at in addition is more targeted interventions, such as sessions on musculoskeletal, training and toolkits for managers in spotting the signs of mental ill health and having sensitive conversations.

Ongoing Focus and Support: Efforts to manage sickness absence continue to be a priority, with regular governance reviews by the People Delivery group aimed at driving consistent reductions. Additionally, wellbeing initiatives—including promotional events, resources, and training opportunities—will be made available to help employees access support and adopt healthier lifestyle choices.

Absences are handled at local level, with the People team assisting line managers to ensure support is given to absence case management. Key priorities include closing absence records to maintain accurate data, conducting return-to-work meetings, and continuous monitoring.

The report stated the most common interventions include access to counselling, phased returns to work and access to an Employee Assistance Programme, all of these are provided by the Service. What we are looking at in addition is more targeted interventions, such as sessions on musculoskeletal, training and toolkits for managers in spotting the signs of mental ill health and having sensitive conversations.

PPL.5.02 - Grievances

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	<div><div>B</div><div>G < 2 per month</div><div>A 2 per month</div><div>R > 2 per month</div></div>
	2024/2025	1	1	4	2	1	4	4	2	1	1	4	3	
	2025/2026	3	2	0	2	1	1							
	Status	R	A	G	A	G	G							
YTD	2024/2025	1	2	6	8	9	13	17	19	20	21	25	28	What is good
	2025/2026	3	5	5	7	8	9							Less is better
	Status	R	A	G	G	G	G							

Ref	PPL.5.02	The number of new grievances recorded each month. Figures include both informal and formal grievances. Where an informal grievance is escalated to being a formal grievance, this will be counted twice.
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	Previous Year	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

The number of grievances raised – both in terms of those raised during the month and overall within the first two quarters of 2025 – remained low, other than in April, where three informal grievances were raised in one month.

Of the nine grievances raised to date during this reporting year, five cases involved Wholetime employees, one an On-call employee and three Support Services employees.

As of the end of September, there were four active cases — three being addressed through the formal procedure and one being managed informally. Of the five cases that have been closed, all were handled informally. Two required no further action following management intervention, one was withdrawn after a management discussion, and one progressed to the formal stage after remaining unresolved during the informal process.

The average time for grievance closure from April to September is 26 days.

We continually review grievances raised to identify if any trends are appearing and to date none have been established. Following the completion of the grievance we undertake a review to identify any learns either from the process itself or for the organisation.

We are committed to addressing concerns promptly and at the most appropriate level. All grievances are handled with transparency, fairness, and respect. The number of grievances raised reflects employees' confidence in the process. When a concern involves an employee, it is managed with fairness and proportionality. We ensure that each issue is addressed using the correct procedures, with suitable resources allocated for investigation and appropriate support provided to all parties involved. Our goal is to resolve matters efficiently and within a reasonable timeframe.

PPL.5.04 - Disciplinary

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	
	2024/2025	1	1	0	2	0	2	1	3	0	2	5	6	G	< 2 per month
	2025/2026	0	0	0	0	1	1							A	2 per month
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G							R	> 2 per month
YTD		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	What is good	
	2024/2025	1	2	2	4	4	6	7	10	10	12	17	23		
	2025/2026	0	0	0	0	1	2								
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G							Less is better	

Ref	PPL.5.04	The number of new disciplinarys recorded each month.
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	Previous Year	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

The number of discipline cases – both in terms of those raised during the month and overall within the first two quarters of 2025 – remained low, with no cases raised between April and July and one case raised in August and one in September.

At the end of Quarter 2 there were four live cases (some relating to previous reporting year) being addressed formally through the Service's Discipline Procedure and at various stages of the process. These cases involved matters from serious misconduct, performance and unacceptable behaviour.

We continually review disciplinarys to identify if any trends are appearing and to date none have been established. Following the completion of the case we undertake a review to identify any learns either from the process itself or for the organisation.

We are committed to addressing concerns promptly and at the most appropriate level. All discipline cases are handled with transparency, fairness, and respect. When a concern involves an employee, it is managed with fairness and proportionality. We ensure that each issue is addressed using the correct procedures, with suitable resources allocated for investigation and appropriate support provided to all parties involved. Our goal is to resolve matters efficiently and within a reasonable timeframe.

PPL.5.06 - Independent Reporting Line Calls

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	
	Target	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	G	
	2025/2026	2	3	1	0	5	0							A	
	Status	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	R	
YTD														What is good	
	Target	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Monitor	
	2025/2026	2	5	6	6	11	11								
	Status	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		

Ref	PPL.5.06	The number of independent reporting line calls received each month
Owner	People Services	
Comparison	-	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

No concerns were raised in September. Five concerns were raised in August, no concerns were raised in July,

Our Safecall numbers show that employees have the confidence to raise issues, and when a concern or complaint is raised about an employee they are treated fairly and proportionately.

Whilst the concerns have been reported separately, and are from different staffing groups across the Service, all are assessed through the assessment panel and investigated accordingly.

PPL.5.09 - Complaints

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	0
	Target	<2	<2	<2	<2	<2	<2	<2	<2	<2	<2	<2	<2	G	=< 1 per month
	2025/2026	0	2	2	2	3	5							A	> 1 per month
	Status	B	A	A	A	A	R							R	> 2 per month
YTD		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	What is good	
	Target	<2	<3	<4	<5	<6	<7	<8	<9	<10	<11	<12	<13		
	2025/2026	0	2	4	6	9	14							Less is better	
	Status	B	G	A	A	A	R								

Ref	PPL.5.09	Number of complaints received each month. This does not identify if the complaints were upheld.
Owner	Information Governance	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

There were ten complaints received between July 2025 and September 2025. Of these ten, three were upheld.

A breakdown of the types of complains can be found below:

- 6 - Miscellaneous
- 1 - Damage to Property
- 1 - Driving
- 1 - Community Engagement
- 1 – Incident

PPL.5.10 - Compliments

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	>5 per month
	2024/2025	1	3	7	4	6	4	3	8	6	5	11	4	G	>0 per month
	2025/2026	0	2	7	5	16	6							A	
	Status	G	G	B	G	B	B							R	
YTD		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	What is good	
	2024/2025	1	4	11	15	21	25	28	36	42	47	58	62		
	2025/2026	0	2	9	14	30	36							More is better	
	Status	G	G	G	G	B	B								

Ref	PPL.5.10	Number of compliments received each month.
Owner	Information Governance	
Comparison	Prev Year	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

Between July and September 2025, we received a total of 27 compliments. A detailed breakdown of the areas these compliments pertain to is provided below:

- 1 – Educational
- 7 – Miscellaneous
- 3 – Community Engagement
- 4 – Home Fire Safety Visit
- 12 – Incident

PPL.6.03 - Injury Rate

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
	2024/2025	5.99	7.95	6.00	4.02	1.97	7.72	5.80	9.70	9.65	5.83	7.78	3.83	B < 5 per month
	2025/2026	1.91	7.68	1.90	5.74	7.66	1.92							G < 8 per month
	Status	B	G	B	G	G	B							A < 10 per month
YTD Avg		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
	2024/2025	5.99	6.97	6.65	6.00	5.18	5.62	5.64	6.16	6.55	6.48	6.60	6.36	What is good
	2025/2026	1.91	4.79	3.82	4.30	4.97	4.47							Less is better
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	B							

Ref	PPL.6.03	The injury rate give the number of people injured over a month, based on a group of 1,000 employees or workers.
Owner	Health & Safety	
Comparison	Previous year	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

PPL.6.04 - Workplace injuries

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
	2024/2025	3	4	3	2	1	4	3	5	5	3	4	2	B 0 per month
	2025/2026	1	4	1	3	4	1							G =< 3 per month
	Status	G	A	G	G	A	G							A < 6 per month
YTD		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
	2024/2025	3	7	10	12	13	17	20	25	30	33	37	39	What is good
	2025/2026	1	5	6	9	13	14							Less is better
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G							

Ref	PPL.6.04	The number of workplace injuries reported across the Service. This includes operational staff, support staff, agency and visitors.
Owner	Health & Safety	
Comparison	Previous year	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

Of the eight record workplace injuries, three were deemed moderate, the remaining five were minor.

The three moderate related to;

- Following water rescue training, a firefighter became ill and required more than seven calendar days off work, triggering a RIDDOR report. As a result of this absence, future water based training will now take place at an alternative location. Additionally, water training for Bucks fire staff will, from April 2026 take place at HR Wallingford which provides a controlled environment for water training.
- During a training session with the Service's boat, a firefighter slipped on a wet surface when entering the water and landed awkwardly on their right knee. Due to the absence lasting over seven calendar days, this triggered a RIDDOR report, as such making this a moderate injury.
- During an incident, while using a bucket of water on a charred area of ground, the action resulted in flames forming to a level that singed the firefighter's hair. Due to timings, this incident was still under investigation at the time of writing.

PPL.6.05 - RIDDOR reportable Incidents

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	
	2024/2025	1	0	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	2	2	0	G	< 1 per month
	2025/2026	0	2	1	1	1	0							A	=> 1 per month
	Status	G	R	A	A	A	G							R	=> 2 per month
YTD	2024/2025	1	1	2	3	3	5	6	7	8	10	12	12	What is good	
	2025/2026	0	2	3	4	5	5							Less is better	
	Status	G	R	A	A	A	G								

Ref	PPL.6.05	Number of safety incidents that required reporting to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013. This would include items such as RIDDOR reportable workplace injuries and RIDDOR reportable dangerous occurrences.
Owner	Health & Safety	
Comparison	Previous year	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

The two RIDDOR reportable incidents related to;

- Following water rescue training, a firefighter became ill and required more than seven calendar days off work, triggering a RIDDOR report. As a result of this absence, future water based training will now take place at an alternative location. Additionally, water training for Bucks fire staff will, from April 2026 take place at HR Wallingford which provides a controlled environment for water training.
- During a training session with the Service's boat, a firefighter slipped on a wet surface when entering the water and landed awkwardly on their right knee. Due to the absence lasting over seven calendar days, this triggered a RIDDOR report, as such making this a moderate injury.

PPL.6.07 - Near Miss Events Recorded

		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	< 2 per month
Monthly	2024/2025	2	1	3	2	3	5	2	1	1	1	2	3	G	< 4 per month
	2025/2026	1	1	2	0	4	1							A	< 5 per month
	Status	B	B	G	B	A	B							R	=> 5 per month
YTD	Target	2	3	6	8	11	16	18	19	20	21	23	26	What is good	
	2025/2026	1	2	4	4	8	9							Monitor	
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	B								

Ref	PPL.6.07	Number of near miss events recorded across the Service. A near miss is where a safety event (an accident or incident) occurs, but no personal injury, damage or financial loss results.
Owner	Health & Safety	
Comparison	Previous year	
Delivery Group	People Delivery Group	

Of the five near miss events recorded, four were deemed to be minor with final event being major.

Due to the timing of this incident, this incident was still under investigation at the time of reporting.

MAKING THE MOST OF OUR FINANCES AND ASSETS



FIN.1.01 - Forecast - Outturn (£000's)

	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Target			42,989	42,989	42,989	42,989							B	Within 0.5%
Forecast	-	-	42,832	42,960	42,997	42,850							G	Within 1.0%
% Difference	-	-	-0.00%	-0.07%	0.02%	0.32%							A	Within 2.0%
Status	-	-	B	B	B	B							R	> 2% difference

What is good

Closer to Target

Ref	FIN.1.01
Owner	Finance
Comparison	Target
Delivery Group	Finance & Assets

The financial measure compares the approved revenue budget (target) against the forecast revenue outturn position (forecast). Negative % difference indicates an underspend whereas positive % difference indicating an overspend.

For more detail in relation to our financial position, please refer to the most recent Budget Monitoring Report (see link in Background Papers).

FIN.2.01 - Capital Spend (£000's)

	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Target			£8,801	£8,801	£8,801	£5,800							B	Within 0.5%
Forecast	-	-	£8,801	£8,801	£8,801	£5,825							G	Within 1.0%
% Difference	-	-	0%	0%	0%	0.4%							A	Within 2.0%
Status	-	-	B	B	B	B							R	> 2% difference

What is good
Closer to Target

Ref	FIN.2.01	The financial measure compares the approved revenue budget (target) against the forecast revenue outturn position (forecast). Negative % difference indicates an underspend whereas positive % difference indicating an overspend.
Owner	Property	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	Finance & Assets	

For more detail in relation to our financial position, please refer to the most recent Budget Monitoring Report (see link in Background Papers).

FIN.2.03 - Energy Usage

	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Monthly	Target												B	
	2025/2026												G	
	Status												A	
Cumulative	Target												R	
	2025/2026													
	Status													

What is good
Less is better

Ref	FIN.2.02	
Owner	Property	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	Finance & Assets	

The smart electricity meters across all our sites were activated in June 2025. The smart gas meters will be activated during Q2 so data will be available from the next quarter onwards. This pack will show the trend for our whole estate, but more detailed analysis comparing sites and looking at root causes of usage will be undertaken within the Property team.

FIN.3.01 - Wholetime Cost (£)

Monthly

	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Target	-	-	22,126	22,126	22,269	22,669						
Forecast	-	-	22,541	22,483	23,044	22,914						
% Difference	-	-	1.9%	1.6%	1.7%	1.1%						
Status	-	-	A	A	A	A						

B	Within 0.5%
G	Within 1.0%
A	Within 2.0%
R	> 2% difference

What is good
Closer to Target

Ref	FIN.3.01	The financial measure compares the approved revenue for our wholetime operations budget (target) against the forecast revenue outturn position (forecast). Negative % difference indicates an underspend whereas positive % difference indicating an overspend.
Owner	Response	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	Finance & Assets	

For more detail in relation to our financial position, please refer to the most recent Budget Monitoring Report (see link in Background Papers).

FIN.3.03 - On-Call Cost (£)

Monthly

	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Target	-	-	1,456	1,456	1,498	1,498						
Forecast	-	-	1,235	1,244	1,314	1,324						
% Difference	-	-	-15.2%	-14.6%	-12.3%	-11.6%						
Status	-	-	R	R	R	R						

B	Within 0.5%
G	Within 1.0%
A	Within 2.0%
R	> 2% difference

What is good
Closer to Target

Ref	FIN.3.03	The financial measure compares the approved revenue for our On-Call operations budget (target) against the forecast revenue outturn position (forecast). Negative % difference indicates an underspend whereas positive % difference indicating an overspend.
Owner	Response	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	Finance & Assets	

For more detail in relation to our financial position, please refer to the most recent Budget Monitoring Report (see link in Background Papers).

FIN.5.01 - Overdue Internal Audits

High		Mar-25	Jul-25											B	0	
	Target	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	G	1	
	2025/2026	0	0											A	2	
	Status	B	B											R	>2	
Medium															What is good	
	Target	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			
	2025/2026	2	0											Less is better		
	Status	A	B													

Ref	FIN.5.01	<p>Each year an Internal Audit plan is agreed based on the risks and needs of the service.</p> <p>The progress and findings are reported to the Overview and Audit committee.</p> <p>This measure shows how many actions are overdue broken down by medium/high rating.</p>
Owner	PMO	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	Finance & Assets	

The most recent progress on Internal Audit actions was taken to the Overview and Audit committee on the 16th July 2025 and can be found here: : [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for BMKFA Overview & Audit Committee, 16/07/2025 10:00](#) .

The next update is due October 2025

FIN.5.02 - Projects

On Track		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
		-	-	-	-
	2025/2026	28	29		
		-	-	-	-
Risk to Progress	Target	<3	<3	<3	<3
	2025/2026	4	6		
	Status	A	R		

B	0 off track
G	< 3 off track
A	< 5 off track
R	> 4 off track

What is good	
Less is better	

Ref	FIN.5.02	<p>The service sets out its Annual plan each year to support the delivery of the Community Risk management plan.</p> <p>Annual plan progress is reviewed monthly at the internal Programme Board.</p> <p>This measure shows how many projects the service has on track and the number of project that are Risk to Progress.</p>
Owner	PMO	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	Finance & Assets	

There are 42 items on the 2025/26 Annual plan including 5 carried over from last year.

At the end of Q2, there are 5 projects that are now complete, 35 are currently in progress but we have seen an increase in the risk to progress projects to 6.

We review our project progress monthly at both the delivery groups and Programme board.

Risk to Progress projects are scrutinised more closely to understand what work/resource is needed to get them back on track.



OPTIMISING OUR TECHNOLOGY AND DATA

DDT.1.01 - Website - Active Users (000's)

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	> 15,000
	Prev 2 years	14.2	14.9	15.9	15.1	18.1	15.3	16.5	15.3	11.7	17.8	13.7	12.0	G	> 10,000
	2025/2026	11.0	11.9	12.5	13.0	13.9	10.7							A	=> 8,000
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G							R	< 8,000
Cumulative	Prev 2 years	14.2	29.1	45.0	60.1	78.3	93.5	110	125	137	155	169	181	What is good	
	2025/2026	11.0	22.9	35.4	48.4	62.2	72.9							Higher is better	
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G								

Ref	DDT.1.01	Our website is our biggest public communication and engagement channel. Website traffic is monitored for user analysis. Currently, we monitor this superficially due to capacity and conflicting priorities. However it enables us to react, when required, yielding valuable insights to help identify audience, improve the customer experience and website performance.
Owner	MarComms	
Comparison	Previous 2 years	
Delivery Group	Finance & Assets	

Although the number of users is lower than previous years, it has still been consistently above the target of 10,000 per month throughout the first quarter.

DDT.1.02 - Social Media - Engagement (000's)

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	> 15,000
	Prev 3 year	14.6	11.5	10.8	21.9	17.1	13.3	11.5	11.4	13.5	14.8	18.2	19.7	G	> 10,000
	2025/2026	32.4	24.1	21.3	15.5	24.3	26.8							A	=> 8,000
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	B							R	< 8,000
Cumulative	Prev 3 year	14.6	26.2	36.9	58.8	75.9	89.2	100.7	112.1	125.6	140.4	158.6	178.3	What is good	
	2025/2026	32.4	56.5	77.8	93.2	117.5	144.3							Higher is better	
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	B								

Ref	DDT.1.02	Total number of unique engagements with our social media content across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.
Owner	MarComms	
Comparison	Previous 3 years	
Delivery Group	Finance & Assets	

Facebook: 24,567 (last month 22,853): Introduction video of newest recruits got over 100K views which had a positive impact on engagements increasing.

Instagram: 1,669 (last month 1,053): 4.33% increase in content I sent out compared to last month.

LinkedIn: 553 (last month 322): 52.58% increase in content sent out compared to last month.

X: 8 (last month) 31 : Less content published/ incident posted.

Overall engagements across all platforms for September 2025: **26,797**

DDT.1.03 - Intranet Active Users

Monthly		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	B	=> 98%
	2024/2025	94.2%	93.6%	92.6%	94.6%	91.9%	93.8%	94.4%	94.8%	91.9%	96.1%	95.9%	95.8%	G	=> 90%
	2025/2026	95.2%	95.4%	95.2%	97.9%	94.2%	95.6%							A	=> 80%
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G							R	< 80%
YTD Avg														What is good	
	2024/2025	94.2%	93.9%	93.5%	93.8%	93.4%	93.5%	93.6%	93.8%	93.8%	93.8%	94.0%	94.2%	Higher is better	
	2025/2026	95.2%	95.3%	95.3%	95.9%	95.6%	95.6%								
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G								

Ref	DDT.1.03	The percentage of staff that access BFRS' intranet each month. Higher numbers of staff accessing the intranet leads to improved communication, enhanced collaboration, streamlined information access, and increased employee engagement.
Owner	MarComms	
Comparison	Monitor	
Delivery Group	Finance & Assets	

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FINANCE & ASSETS - INFORMATION GOVERNANCE

DDT.3.01 - Reportable Data Breaches

Annual		20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	B	
	Target	0	0	0	0	0	0	G	0
	Actual	0	0	0	0	0	0	A	
	Status	G	G	G	G	G	G	R	> 0
What is good									
Less is better									

Ref	DDT.3.01	A data breach means a breach of security leading to the accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal data. A reportable data breach is one that triggers a requirement for notification to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) where a breach is likely to result in a significant risk to an individual to whom the data relates.
Owner	Legal & Governance	
Comparison	Target	
Delivery Group	Finance & Assets	

There have been no reportable data breaches.



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 10 December 2025

Report title: Update of Standing Orders Relating to Contracts - Contract Procedure Rules (CPR)

Lead Member: Cllr Niknam Hussain, Lead Member for Finance & Assets, Information Security, IT.

Report sponsor: Mark Hemming, Director of Finance and Assets

Author and contact: Ronda Smith, rondasmith@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Decision

Recommendations:

That the Authority approve the updated Standing Orders Relating to Contracts – Contract Procedure Rules (Appendix 1)

Executive summary:

The Contract Procedure Rules (**CPR**) are intended to promote good procurement practice, public accountability, fair competition, value for money and compliance with procurement law.

The proposed amendments reflect a significant update in line with the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023 (**the Act**) which came into force on 24 February 2025. The Act repeals the Public Contract Regulations 2015, the Concessions Contract Regulations 2016 and the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016, to become the law that regulates procurement in the UK.

The proposed amendments incorporate detailed procedural guidance and enhanced compliance and transparency measures. These changes aim to improve the efficiency, accountability, and effectiveness of the Authority's procurement activities.

Procurement Act 2023 – Key Updates

The Act aims to create a simpler and more transparent regime for public sector procurement that will deliver better value for money and reduce costs for suppliers and the public sector. Procurement procedures have been simplified and the Act introduces two procedures of competitive tendering: the open procedure and the competitive flexible procedure.

The open procedure is a single stage procedure, and all information is submitted by suppliers at the tender stage. This could be used for a known and simple

requirement with a small market where there is no need to reduce the number of suppliers that are assessed.

The competitive flexible procedure provides the ability to design your own procurement process. The Authority could use this procedure where its requirements are complex, and it would like to have formal engagement with suppliers during a negotiation or dialogue stage. The Authority could also assess conditions of participation before inviting a tender submission to reduce the number of suppliers invited to participate.

The Act highlights a transparency by default position by introducing 17 procurement notices. Transparency will apply for the lifecycle of the procurement, for example, from planning procurement pipeline activity and conducting preliminary market engagement, reporting on supplier performance, contract modification and termination notices.

The new Central Digital Platform (**CDP**) has been established which consists of an enhanced version of Find a Tender and a new supplier information system. The platform improves the quality and accessibility of commercial data for contracting authorities. It provides suppliers a single source to find tender opportunities and functionality that will allow them to register and submit basic business information without needing to duplicate this. This reduces administration and duplication. This will make it easier to participate in procurements, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), by submitting their basic business information in one central place. The notices will be published on the CDP via the Authority's eProcurement platform, In-Tend.

The Act introduces greater scrutiny for assessing suppliers and this also applies to sub-contractors, associated or connected persons that are participating in the procurement process with them. Suppliers will self-declare against the exclusion grounds on the CDP.

When evaluating tenders in an above threshold procurement process (the thresholds include VAT, for services and purchase of goods the threshold is currently £213,477 and £5,336,937 for works), the Authority will need to check the debarment list.

Contract management for contracts above £5 million is set out in the Act and contracts of this value must have at least 3 Key Performance Indicators (**KPIs**). Performance must be reported against the KPIs annually. Copies of the contract must be published. The Act permits certain redactions.

The main changes to the CPR to reflect the Procurement Act 2023 are outlined in the following table:

Current CPR (Dec 2022)	New CPR (Nov 2025)
1. Basic Principles	<p>Replaced by:</p> <p>Section 1. PROCUREMENT OVERVIEW</p> <p>This includes key new areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing Legislation • Application of the Rules • Procurement Objectives • Procurement Policy and Social Value • Conflicts of Interest • CRMP • Working with SMEs • Excluding Suppliers
2. Responsibilities of Officers	<p>Updated by:</p> <p>Section 1 - Item 1.6 Roles & Responsibilities</p>
3. Partnerships	<p>Updated by:</p> <p>Item 1.11 Partnership Agreements</p>
4. Exemptions	<p>Updated by:</p> <p>Section 6.1 Waivers & Exemptions Approval</p>
<p>5. Requirements for all Contracts</p> <p>6. Steps Prior to Letting a Contract</p> <p>7. Requirements to Ensure Competition</p>	<p>Replaced by:</p> <p>Section 2. PROCUREMENT – Planning, Design, Timings & Documentation</p> <p>This section details the planning, documentation and process to be considered prior to commencing a procurement and that Officers have all the required approvals in place, (e.g., value, duration, lots, budget, risk, authority to procure/ award) all in accordance with the Authority’s governance.</p> <p>This includes the updated values and categories for ‘Below Threshold’ procurements along with Tables 2a & 2b, detailing the Documents & Process Requirements Checklist for ‘Below Threshold’ procurements and ‘Above Threshold’ procurements.</p>

Current CPR (Dec 2022)	New CPR (Nov 2025)
8. Competitive Tendering Process 9. Creation & maintenance of an Approved List 10. Standards & Award Criteria 11. Invitation to Tender 12. Shortlisting 13. Submission, receipt & Opening of Tenders 14. Clarification procedures 15. Tender Evaluation 16. Award of Contract 17. Executing a Contract (17.1 & 17.2)	Replaced by: Section 3. PROCUREMENT DOCUMENTATION And Section 4. PROCUREMENT PROCESS and CONTRACT MANAGEMENT Section 4 Item 4.10.4 & 4.10.5 Contracts to bear the common Seal of the Authority – value increased from £500,000 to £1,000,000 - to provide a more efficient procedure through alignment with our collaborative partners.
18. Post Contract Monitoring 19. Termination of Contract	Replaced by: Section 5. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT
20. Land & Property 21. Asset Disposals (other than Land & Property)	Updated by: Section 6.5 Disposal of Goods & Assets Added: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative Procurements • Purchase Cards • Community Right of Challenge • Grants

Below-threshold contracts are not subject to the same rules within the Act as Above Threshold ‘covered’ procurements.

This gives the Authority greater flexibility in designing and running a below-threshold procurement and awarding and managing the resulting contract.

The updated below-threshold processes reflect a more proportionate value and process for specific categories of expenditure to improve accessibility to Small & Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) or Voluntary Community & Social Enterprises VCSE, whilst also delivering the flexibility of simplified processes to encourage participation of suppliers and targeted procurement to deliver efficiencies.

General goods and services now include VAT, and the level 2 value has slightly increased to £99,999 including VAT.

The categories of Consultancy Services, ICT Goods & Services level 1 value has increased to £99,999 including VAT to improve accessibility to SMEs and streamline processes for suppliers in these specific categories.

The remaining categories have also been updated to improve efficiencies and deliver value for money through targeted effective procurement tailored to the marketplace.

Full details are located in Section 2.6 Thresholds - **Table 1 – Below Threshold procurement processes.**

The updated Standing Orders Relating to Contracts - Contract Procurement Rules link to the **Strategic Enabler – Making the Most of our Finance and Assets.**

Financial implications:

In reviewing the CPR the Authority can demonstrate accountability of its use of resources by updating in line with latest legislation and best practice guidance appropriate to the good governance of the Authority and the Service.

Risk management:

Not updating the CPR would greatly increase the risk of non-compliant Procurement at the Authority.

This could leave the Authority open to the risk of challenge for not complying with procurement legislation. This could include a Court ordering that a contract be set aside, that the procurement process is suspended, and order that the procurement process be run again, and/or an order for damages

Legal implications:

Its terms of reference reserve to the Authority the power to vary the Standing Orders Relating to Contracts.

In not updating the CPR the Authority would not have an up to date set of Standing Orders that are compliant with its statutory duties when spending public money.

These changes reflect the legislative changes to the public procurement regime.

CPR ensure that contracts are appropriate for their purpose, provide the right balance between price and quality, and are procured in a transparent and fair way that demonstrates probity and compliance with the Authority's policies and relevant legislation.

Privacy and security implications:

No direct impact.

Duty to collaborate:

Updating the CPR to reflect relevant legislation and aligning processes will further support the collaborative approach to procurement with our partners across the Thames Valley region and wider collaborative working with UK Fire Services and other public sector organisations.

Health and safety implications:

No direct impact.

Environmental implications:

Social value is now included in the updated CPR, which is about improving economic, social and environmental wellbeing from public sector contracts over and above the delivery of the services directly required.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

Equal Treatment (non-discrimination), unless justified, is one of the main Procurement Objectives. All procurements must be carried out within a specific legal framework and based on principles of equal treatment, transparency, and non-discrimination.

Consultation and communication:

The CPR are published externally via the website and internally via the intranet.

A procurement and contract management e-Learning package will be available to all staff via the Staff e-learning platform.

Background papers:

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (2022) Standing Orders Relating to Contracts. Available at: <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/fire-authority-standing-orders.pdf>

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Standing Orders Relating to Contracts – Contract Procedure Rules	



STANDING ORDERS RELATING TO CONTRACTS

CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

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1 Procurement Overview

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In these rules, **Contracting Authority** means Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority
- 1.1.2 These rules set out how the **Contracting Authority** will contract their various requirements and how suppliers wishing to work for the **Contracting Authority** can access those opportunities.
- 1.1.3 Public sector procurement is the process of acquiring goods, services and works as needed to deliver our services.
- 1.1.4 Depending on the nature of the procurement, the value, and any specific social interests that the contract may attract, the procurement process must be designed to facilitate competition, optimise quality, and deliver value for money across the whole life cycle of the contract.
- 1.1.5 To ensure delivery of the above, all procurements must be carried out within a specific legal framework and based on principles of equal treatment, transparency, and non-discrimination.

1.2 Governing Legislation

- 1.2.1 These **Contract Procedure Rules** ("Rules") set out how the **Contracting Authority** will deliver against this obligation.
- 1.2.2 All Procurements for Contracts, by **Contracting Authority** staff or members (including where managed by an external organisation or public body on the **Contracting Authority's** behalf), MUST comply with these **Rules**, the **Contracting Authority's** Financial Regulations, **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation** and all other relevant UK Legislation; with '*applicable*' relating to the date on which the procurement is commenced/ advertised, the Framework/ / Dynamic Market was established or where no competitive process is required, a purchase order is raised.
- 1.2.3 Where there is a discrepancy between these rules and the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation** the officers are to comply with the legislation
- 1.2.4 Where there is a conflict between the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation** and any other relevant legislation (as identified during procurement planning) the **Monitoring Officer** must be consulted immediately to carry out a legal, project risk assessment.
- 1.2.5 The **Contracting Authority** will follow Procurement Policy Notes (PPNs) and the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS).
- 1.2.6 Non-compliance with any of these rules may constitute grounds for disciplinary action.

1.3 Application of the Rules (Regulated Procurements)

- 1.3.1 These rules govern:
 - (a) any contract for the supply, of goods, services or works, (not exempt/ excluded under 1.4 below) regardless of value,
 - (b) using Frameworks or Dynamic Purchasing Systems, or Dynamic Markets
 - (c) collaborative procurements,
 - (d) consultancy requirements,



- (e) equipment hires or lease through rental agreements,
- (f) disposal of assets.

1.4 Excluded/ Exempted Contracts (Not Regulated)

- 1.4.1 These rules do not apply to contracts that are classified as excluded/ exempted, as defined by the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**; including but not limited to:
 - (a) **Contracting Authority to Contracting Authority** (Subsidiary) arrangements, vertical or horizontal – subject to approval by the Director of Finance & Assets.
 - (i) **Vertical** - The **Contracting Authority** exercises a parent or similar control or joint control with other **Contracting Authorities** on the entity as it does with its own departments, the entity carries out more than 80% of its activities for the controlling **Contracting Authorities** and there is no private sector money in the entity.
 - (ii) **Horizontal - Contracting Authority to Contracting Authority** co-operation – to achieve objectives which the **Contracting Authorities** have in common, through an arrangement that is solely for the public interest, and no more than 20% of the activities envisaged by the arrangement are intended to be carried out for reasons other than for the purposes of their public functions.
 - (b) Subject matter exemptions:
 - (i) Certain types of legal advice e.g., relating to judicial proceedings and/ or dispute resolution
 - (ii) Certain types of financial advice e.g., funding or financing arrangements, investment services
 - (iii) Employment contracts
 - (iv) Purchases made at public auction or of goods sold due to insolvency.
 - (v) Land contracts (including leases, licences, and transfers)
 - (vi) Grants of money, these cannot be contracts as there is no consideration and they are not services required to be delivered by the Authority.
- 1.4.2 Any other arrangements excluded by the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**.

1.5 Procurement Objectives

- 1.5.1 Procurement aims and objectives cover not only those objectives set out in the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**, but also those set out in the NPPS and the **Contracting Authority's** own procurement policies; these objectives should be used to determine the contract specific outcomes to be achieved by a specific procurement during the planning process.
- 1.5.2 These objectives may include, but not be limited to, all or any of the following and their inclusion should be informed by and tailored to the subject matter of the contract (legal, technical and commercial requirements).
 - (a) Delivering Value for Money
 - (b) Maximising public benefit (such as delivering Social Value)
 - (c) Sharing Information
 - (d) Equal Treatment (non-discrimination), unless justified.



- (e) Removing Barriers for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- (f) Acting (and being seen to act with) Integrity (inc. accountability)
- (g) Fair and transparent (effective) competition

1.6 Roles & Responsibilities

- 1.6.1 The **Procurement Manager** (and function) is responsible for all procurement process and compliance, including; ownership of procurement option appraisals and process design, procurement training, procurement process management (including responsibilities for all notices up to the publication of the **Contract Award Notice**, ownership of e-tendering portal, ownership and provision of all procurement templates (including **Contracting Authority's** standard form contracts)), completion/ approval of procurement template and reports, and oversight of all activities relating to waivers, contract modifications or termination.
- 1.6.2 The **Procurement Manager** (and function) is responsible for supporting the planning for and management of all contracts allocated to the individual Officers (regardless of how they are procured); specifically, feeding into procurement documents relating to contract management requirements, managing all applications for waivers, exemption or modification requests, owning the contract register (ensuring that information is kept up to date and that copies of contracts are attached) and forward planning for re-procurement of cyclical requirements, supporting Project Officers with contract management including financial and quality performance reporting, ensuring compliance with the **Contracting Authority's** Governance requirements, publication of all mandatory and optional notices as required post the publication of the **Contract Award Notice**, ensuring all contract subject to the Gateway Process report in accordance with the stated procedures.
- 1.6.3 The **Project Lead/ Lead Officer** is responsible for all pre-procurement governance and budgetary approvals, overseeing all technical document creation, organising any legal documents that are required, supporting all stages of the procurement process, co-ordinating the resourcing of tender evaluation and moderation sessions, completing any procurement related reports and any pre-contract governance requirements and working with Procurement Manager & Legal to finalise contracts all in accordance with this document, relevant procurement legislation and other associated legislation.
- 1.6.4 The **Monitoring Officer/ Director of Finance and Assets** is responsible for all legal decisions and activities; whether delegated to legal representatives or being actioned on behalf of the Service.
- 1.6.5 The **Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive** must have delegated powers for the contract or ensure that the project has the formal approval of the appropriate Committee of Authority; ensure there is full budgetary provision for the contract and the sources of funding are fully detailed before starting the contract process; ensure that expenditure is fully contained within the approved budget/cash limit unless prior approval has been obtained from the Committee of the Authority; ensure that he or she has given written delegation of the role that the appropriate Officer may take in the contracting process on behalf of the Authority; ensure that his or her staff complies with these Standing Orders relating to Contracts.

1.7 Separation of Duties

- 1.7.1 As part of the commitment to transparency, accountability, and service integrity, an individual that conducts a procurement, raises a purchase order, or requests a waiver cannot also approve one.



- 1.7.2 All requests and approval/ awards therefore should be raised by one individual and approved by a different individual and in accordance with the decision value and this document.

1.8 Conflicts of Interest

- 1.8.1 **Public Procurement Legislation**, as part of ensuring that all processes are managed fairly and with integrity, require all individuals (officers and members) and suppliers involved in any stage of the contract life cycle to both identify/ disclose and mitigate any perceived, potential and/ or actual conflicts of interest.
- 1.8.2 Compliance with this requirement will include carrying out a conflict-of-interest assessment whenever anyone new gets involved in the procurement, approval and/ or contract management.
- 1.8.3 All conflict-of-interest assessments must be recorded on a conflicts of interest register and kept under review during the whole life cycle of the contract. The assessment must also include details of any mitigations taken/ to be undertaken to mitigate potentially unfair outcomes; e.g., use of Ethical Wall agreements, use of alternative evaluators, etc.
- 1.8.4 The **Procurement Manager** will own the register and in conjunction with the **Monitoring Officer/ Director of Finance and Assets**, advise on appropriate mitigations and risks.

1.9 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

- 1.9.1 The **Contracting Authority** has established a **Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)**. This strategy framework forms the foundation for our Annual Delivery Plan.
- 1.9.2 Officers are required to align their procurements to these plans; with guidance available from the **Procurement Manager**.

1.10 Procurement Policy & Social Value

- 1.10.1 The **Contracting Authority** is committed to delivering social value through their procurements, where legislation is applicable to the Contracting Authority, this being in consideration of the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**, the **Public Sector (Social Value) Act 2012** and associated **Procurement Policy Notes** relating to delivering social value, and the **Social Value Model** (PPN 06/20).
- 1.10.2 The **Contracting Authority's** commitments relate, where possible, to *creating opportunities to support the local economy, local jobs, training opportunities, as well as ensuring the wellbeing of both the staff and the communities in which we work.*
- 1.10.3 Where Social Value is included within a procurement, it must be related to the subject matter of the contract and must not increase costs.

1.11 Partnership Arrangements

- 1.11.1 The **Contracting Authority** has entered into a number of arrangements with partner **Contracting Authorities** for the purchase of goods and services; officers must therefore liaise with procurement before commencing a new procurement for similar/ additional requirements to ensure that those arrangements are not breached or cause relationship problems across the **Contracting Authorities** partners.

1.12 Corporate Contracts

- 1.12.1 Where the **Contracting Authority** establishes a number of corporate contracts, including but not limited to; stationery, treasury, insurance, and ICT services.



Officers must liaise with procurement before carrying out a separate/additional procurement for such requirements.

1.13 Use of Consultants

- 1.13.1 Where the **Contracting Authority** requires the technical input of industry experts/ consultants to either resource and/or manage a procurement or inform a specification, or deliver a particular process, officers are required to ensure the following is applied:
- (a) The service is for a discrete (or multiple discrete) piece of work and/or is not backfilling a **Contracting Authority** post.
 - (b) The consultants are procured in accordance with these Rules.
 - (c) The consultant is experienced in and fully understands all **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation** and agrees to be bound by them.
 - (d) There is a clear specification of requirements and responsibilities set out in their appointment, including adherence to these rules and relevant legislation and that this is documented in the form of contract used.
 - (e) Consultants must not make any decision to award a contract.

1.14 Working with SMEs

- 1.14.1 The **Contracting Authority** is committed to making contracting opportunities accessible to all interested suppliers; and where appropriate (and not disproportionate to do so) remove barriers to SMEs participating in the procurement.
- 1.14.2 Officers, when designing a procurement, must consider the use of Lots, encouraging consortia bids, structuring the documents to be SME friendly, and setting financial participation thresholds to the minimum needed to manage performance risk/ failure.

1.15 Excluding Suppliers & Subcontractors

- 1.15.1 The **Contracting Authority** may exclude a supplier where they or one of their proposed subcontractors have exhibited behaviours that are unacceptable to the **Contracting Authority**.
- 1.15.2 Details of when and for what (mandatory and discretionary grounds) a supplier may/ must be excluded is available in the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**.

1.16 Identifying Opportunities

- 1.16.1 All advertised procurements must be advertised initially on the **Central Digital Platform** in line with the contract value and the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**. It will also be advertised on and managed through the **Contracting Authority's** e-tendering Portal.
- 1.16.2 Suppliers wishing to bid for **Contracting Authority** contracts should register on both the **Central Digital Platform** and the referenced e-tendering portal <https://sell2.in-tend.co.uk/blpd/home>

1.17 Contracts Register

- 1.17.1 All current contracts are included on the **Contracting Authority's Online Contract Register**. This includes details of the current supplier(s), contract value, and the current contract expiry date along with details of any options to extend.
- 1.17.2 The **Online Contract Register** is updated with details of all new contracts



2 Procurement – Planning, Design, Timings & Documentation.

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 The activities detailed in this section applies where the spend is not exempted from these rules under Section 1.4 above.
- 2.1.2 No procurement may proceed without an Officer having properly completed the **Project Initiation Document (PID)** and evidencing that they have considered all of the planning, documentation and process considerations detailed in this document and that they have all the required approvals in place, (e.g., value, duration, lots, budget, risk, authority to procure/ award) all in accordance with the **Contracting Authority's** governance.

2.2 Contract Types and Regimes

- 2.2.1 All spend must be classified by type and regime before a procurement process can be designed; this is due to different types and regimes having different financial thresholds and obligations. The types and regimes include.
- 2.2.2 **Types - Goods** (supplies or products), **Services** (labour, consultants, or technical resources); or **Works** (Construction Projects);
- 2.2.3 **Regimes - Utilities** (Gas, electric, Water,), **Light Touch** (legal services), **Concession** (Supplier risk/ paid by service users), **Exempt/ Excluded** (Not covered).

2.3 Contract Durations

- 2.3.1 Before a procurement process can be designed/ commenced, officers need to decide both the initial and maximum contract durations (including any optional extension) and what might be the justification to apply those extensions.
- 2.3.2 Depending on the value and nature of the contract being procured, the duration may be limited by the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**. Officers must check with procurement and legal before finalising this decision.

2.4 Estimating Contract Values

- 2.4.1 The estimated contract value must include ALL monies that could be paid over the maximum life span of the contract (or Framework/ Dynamic Market), to the successful tenderer(s) regardless of the source; e.g., all planned and potential costs, additional requirements, fees/ commissions, contract extensions and/ or prizes/ participation costs plus any contingencies, whether funded by the authority, other grants or paid by service users. The total must also include VAT.
- 2.4.2 This value must not be artificially inflated or disaggregated as it will feed into various decisions, including route to market, and assessing whether a supplier has the capacity to deliver the contract.
- 2.4.3 The calculated value, calculations and assumptions must be documented in the **Project Initiation Document**.

2.5 Duty to Consider Lots

- 2.5.1 When considering the above, officers must consider the use of Lots and the potential benefit of working with (local) SMEs (e.g., reduce overhead costs, local knowledge, public benefit) with the opportunity to achieve economy of scale discounts, manage market uncertainty, and the potential contract management benefits of appointing a single supplier.
- 2.5.2 In considering how to make opportunities accessible to SMEs, officers **MUST** ensure that they do NOT disaggregate, or sub-divide like or similar requirements



purely for the sole purpose of avoiding the rules for above threshold/ public contracts. They must also ensure that the process for removing barriers for SMEs, does not unfairly advantage them.

2.6 Thresholds

- 2.6.1 Procurement Thresholds are determined by category and sector (regime); they determine which routes to market are available and what rules must be followed.
- 2.6.2 The Thresholds come from the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation** (and updated by **Procurement Policy Notes**) and are based on the **Government Procurement Agreement** (GPA); these values being updated every other year.
- 2.6.3 The rules and available routes to market are determined by whether the estimated contract value is deemed to be 'Above Threshold' (Covered Procurements/ Public Contracts) or 'Below Threshold.' See [Procurement policy notes](#).
- 2.6.4 For Below Threshold spend, the following table sets out a number of routes to market and the estimated value (**which include VAT**) and category/ sector rules for when a route is available for use.

Table 1 – Below Threshold procurement processes

Category/ Sector (Regime)	Level 1 - Single Quote	Level 2 - Request for Quotes	Level 3a & b Simple Tender
Goods (G)	£0 to £29,999	£30,000 to £99,999	£100,000 to Goods £GPA (3a)
Services (S)	£0 to £29,999	£30,000 to £99,999	£100,000 to Services £GPA (3a)
Consultancy Services	£0 to £99,999	£100,000 to £GPA	
Licences	£0 to £99,999	£100,000 to £GPA	
ICT Goods & Services	£0 to £99,999	£100,000 to £GPA	
Works (All regimes)	£0 to £99,999	£100,000 to £499,999	£500,000 to Works £GPA (3b)
Light Touch Service	£0 to £99,999	£100,000 to £299,999	£300,000 to Light Touch £GPA (3a)
Concession (ALL)	£0 to £99,999	£100,000 to £499,999	£500,000 to £GPA(3a)
Utilities	£0 to £99,999	£100,000 to £499,999	£500,000 to £GPA(3a)
Frameworks	In accordance with Framework Rules (direct award up to £199,999 (where permitted) with further competition above £200,000)		

- 2.6.5 Regardless of the minimum obligations, Officers may choose (or may be instructed by procurement) to conduct a procedure in line with a higher level, including one which is for Above Threshold/ Covered Procurement; including issuing a Tender Notice to invite interested suppliers to submit a tender/ participate in the procurement.
- 2.6.6 **The Procurement Manager** may also mandate such a process where the estimated contract value is very close to the relevant £GPA Threshold, or the contract is high profile/ of public interest, or where it is a condition of the funding that a specific process must be applied.

2.7 Risk Assessments

- 2.7.1 Officers are required to carry out a risk assessment as part of the project initiation and planning process, and at the very least, in the following situations:



- (a) where the procurement is of strategic importance to the Authority and/or Above Threshold (a Covered Procurement) AND/ OR
- (b) is establishing a new Framework or Dynamic Market with multiple suppliers.
- (c) includes a Special Purpose Vehicle,
- (d) is for a contract duration in excess of five years,
- (e) includes design liabilities and/ or collateral warranties,
- (f) involves intellectual property,
- (g) involves a significant Health & Safety consideration,
- (h) is likely to be subject to significant inflation risks, or
- (i) where the spend relates to substantial direct awards or contract extensions that carry risks under **the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**.

2.7.2 The outcome of the risk assessment must both be:

- (a) documented in the Project Initiation Document as it will feed into the process design and governance/ approval process; and
- (b) added to the relevant Risk Register for monthly monitoring by the Project Lead, where appropriate.

2.8 Preliminary Market Engagement

- 2.8.1 Officers are required as part of designing both the **Competitive Tendering Procedure** and the **Associated Tender Documentation** to consider running a **Preliminary Market Engagement Event**. Such events should be used where a contract has been assessed as high value, high profile, complex or specialist in nature, the market is saturated, made up of SMEs, or is suitable for a consortia delivery model; or as otherwise directed by Procurement. This decision and reason are to be recorded in the **Tender Record**.
- 2.8.2 Where a **Preliminary Market Engagement Event** is to be used, it must be advertised using an appropriate notice, and the **Contracting Authority** must take reasonable steps to ensure that participants at an event do not have an unfair advantage in the subsequent procurement; this to be assessed using the **Conflict-of-Interest Assessments** and documented in the **Tender Record**.
- 2.8.3 All information shared before, during or after a **Preliminary Market Engagement Event** must also be included within the subsequent Associated Tender Documents (tender pack).

2.9 Routes to Market, Document Requirement & Timescales

- 2.9.1 The minimum process/ route to market is determined by the category and value;
- 2.9.2 The **Contracting Authority** has decided that procurements should be let in accordance with Table 1
- 2.9.3 For “below threshold” procurements, the table 2a sets out the stages, activities, and documents required for each of the three levels set out in table 1 above. An exception being where a framework is being used to procure the requirements, in which case the rules of the framework apply.

Table 2a – Document and Process Requirement Checklist

	Below Threshold			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3a	Level 3b



Stages	Activities/ Documents	Single quote	Request for Quotes	Simple Tender (G&S)	Simple Tender (Works)
Process for identifying/ inviting suppliers to quote/ tender	Identify suitable supplier(s)	ü	ü	X	X
	Include at least 1 local supplier	ü	ü	X	X
	Invite all Suppliers to tender	X	X	X	X
	Advert on e-tendering Portal	X	X	ü	ü
	Advert on Central Digital Platform	X	X	ü	ü
Communication methodology	Manage by email	ü	X	X	X
	Manage on e-tendering portal	X	ü	ü	ü
Suitability assessment	Excluded/ Excludable Check	ü	ü	ü	ü
	Due Diligence Form - Capacity & Capability	ü	ü	ü	X
	SQ- Capacity & Capability (single Stage)	X	X	X	X
	SQ- Common Assessment Standard – single stage – concise form (Works only)	ü	ü	X	ü
	SQ- Common Assessment Standard – separate stage – intermediate form (Works Only)	X	X	X	ü
Documentation to be provided	Specification	ü	ü	ü	ü
	Contract	ü	ü	ü	ü
	RFQ/ Tender Response Document	X	ü	ü	ü
	Form of Tender	X	X	ü	ü
	Tender Instruction inc. timescales	X	X	ü	ü
	RFQ Instructions inc. timescales	X	ü	X	X
Evaluation Methodology	Price Only Evaluation model	ü	ü	X	X
	Quality & Price Evaluation model	X	ü	ü	X
	Quality, Social Value & Price Evaluation model	X	X	ü	ü
Review/ negotiation opportunity	Acceptability Review	ü	X	X	X
	Opportunity to Negotiate	ü	X	X	X
	Opportunity to refresh (ALL Suppliers)	ü	ü	X	X
process considerations	Min Number of evaluators	1	2	3	3
	Estimated timescales for process	2-4 weeks	4-6 weeks	6-10 weeks	12-14 weeks
Outcome notifications	Condition of Participation Outcome Letters	X	X	X	ü
	Award/ Outcome Letters to all suppliers	ü			
	Contract Award Notice – Standstill	Discretionary			
	Contracts Detail Notice (above £30k) on the Contracts Finder/ Central Digital Platform	Over £30k incl. VAT			

2.9.4 For Procurements that are Above Threshold (**Covered Procurements**) the table 2b sets out the stages, activities, and documents to be included in the design of the procurement by Officers.

2.9.5 Where using a framework, officers must, in addition to the rules below, comply with the framework rules; where there is a conflict, the framework rules take precedence.

Table 2b – Document and Process Requirements Checklist

		Above Threshold			Any Value	
		Level 4	Level 4	Level 4	Level 4	Level 4
Stages	Activities/ Documents	Open Procedure	Competitive Flexible Procedure	Direct Award	Use Existing Framework	Using Existing DPS/ DM
Process for identifying/	Identify suitable supplier(s)	X	X	ü	X	X
	Include at least 1 local supplier	X	X	X	X	X



inviting suppliers to quote/ tender	Invite all Suppliers to tender	X	X	X	ü	ü
	Advert on e-tendering Portal	ü	ü	X	X	X
	Advert on Central Digital Platform	ü	ü	X	X	X
Communication methodology	Manage by email	X	X	ü	X	X
	Manage on portal	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Suitability assessment	Excluded/ Excludable Check	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
	SSQ- Capacity & Capability Check (single stage)	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
	SSQ- Condition of Participation / limit suppliers	X	ü	X	X	X
Associated Tender Documents to be provided	Specification	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
	Contract	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
	Award Criteria & Assessment Methodology Document	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
	Pricing Documents	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
	Form of Tender	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
	Tender Instruction inc. timescales	ü	ü	X	ü	ü
Evaluation Methodology	Price Only Evaluation model	X	X	ü	X	X
	Quality & Price Evaluation model	X	X	X	ü	X
	Quality, Social Value & Price Evaluation model	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Review/ negotiation opportunity	Acceptability Review	X	X	ü	X	X
	Opportunity to Negotiate	X	ü	ü	X	ü
	Opportunity to refresh (ALL Suppliers)	X	ü	ü	X	ü
process considerations	Min Number of evaluators	3	4	2	2	3
	Estimated timescales	14–18 weeks	over 26 weeks	2 weeks	4-12 weeks	4-12 weeks
Outcome notifications	Condition of Participation/ Limiting Suppliers Letters	X	ü	X	N/A	
	Standstill Letters*/Assessment Summaries**/ outcome Letters	ü	ü	X	ü	ü
	Contract Award Notice (On Contracts Finder and Find a Tender Service */ Contract Award Notice/ Standstill on Central Digital Platform**)	ü	ü	ü	optional	optional
	Contract Details Notice (On Central Digital Platform**)	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü

* For procurements commenced before 28th October 2024

** for procurements commenced after 28th October 2024

2.10 Legal Considerations

2.10.1 Contracts

- All contracts must be completed either in hardcopy or electronic form before contract commencement.
- The contract may be a standard form, an amended standard form, a bespoke/ project specific contract, or a set of Heads of Terms; and these may be provided either in a finalised or draft form (depending on the route to market being used).
- The agreed form of contract must be made available to suppliers as part of the **Associated Tender Documents** before they are required to submit a price/ tender.

2.10.2 Bonds & Guarantees



- (a) The Procurement Manager, taking advice from the Monitoring Officer and Director of Finance and Assets, will consider the appropriateness of requesting a Performance Bond and/or a Parent Company Guarantee where there are concerns about the financial performance of the tenderer. .
- (b) Where a bond or guarantee is deemed necessary this should be in a form acceptable to the **Contracting Authority**

2.10.3 Non-Procurement Legislation

- (a) The design of any procurement must take into account all relevant legislation; as applies to the **Contracting Authority**, the project, and the supply chain.
- (b) In the event that there is an incompatibility identified between two or more relevant pieces of legislation; this must be escalated to the **Monitoring Officer Director of Finance and Assets** for advice and a decision on how to manage the conflict.

2.11 Procurement Programme

- 2.11.1 In addition to the indicative timescales included in Tables 2a and 2b above, Officers will also need to plan for and include time allowances for complying with the **Contracting Authority's** approvals and reporting requirements. This being particularly significant where a procurement is of strategic importance and/ or is to be monitored through the Programme ispo.
- 2.11.2 Officers should work with the appropriate **Head of Service** and the **Procurement Manager** to create a procurement programme against which resource requirements can be managed.

3 Procurement Documentation

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 The procurement document required will depend on the selected route to market, the stages, and the activities to be completed; Tables 2a & b above set out the minimum information, process and notification requirements that must be adhered to.

3.2 Notices

- 3.2.1 The publication of the various notices is a legal requirement both to create effective competition and ensure transparency in the spending of public funds, the most commonly used notices and reasons for use are detailed below:
- 3.2.2 **An Early Market Engagement Notice** – A notice inviting suppliers to engage in an Early Market Engagement Event.
- 3.2.3 **A Tender Notice** – A notice inviting suppliers to submit a tender or a request to participate – minimum 25 days (unless urgency).
- 3.2.4 **Procurement Termination Notices** – used to inform the market that the Contracting Authority is terminating the procurement/ not making an award.
- 3.2.5 The **Contracting Authority** may also be required to publish other notices in relation to their plans, events, and/ or other decisions depending on the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**, to the decision – advice should be sought from the **Procurement Manager** as part of designing the procurement.

3.3 Instructions

- 3.3.1 Officers must ensure that they effectively and transparently communicate with all suppliers' details of the Competitive Tendering Procedure. This could include excluding suppliers, conditions of participation, tender rounds (including



intermediate rounds) and/ or negotiation stages), how long it should take and what is required from the supplier at each stage to enable them to progress/ have a chance to be awarded the contract.

- 3.3.2 This document must also detail the procedural rules including providing detail as to how the **Contracting Authority** will manage clarification, incomplete tenders or other rules, the breach of which could amount to their being excluded from the procurement process.
- 3.3.3 In addition, communications must make clear whether there is scope to modify the procurement after the Tender Notice has been published (this also needs to have been stated in the Tender Notice).
- 3.3.4 It must also detail how suppliers should communicate with the **Contracting Authority** during the procurement process and the various rounds/ activities.

3.4 Due Diligence / Standard Selection Questionnaire/ Conditions of Participation

- 3.4.1 It is essential that the **Contracting Authority** only appoint suppliers to deliver public sector contracts that are deemed suitable (meet the legal, ethical, and social standards) as set out in the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**.
- 3.4.2 Equally, it is important to check that they have the capability, capacity, and experience needed to deliver the specific technical requirement; and this is to be checked regardless as to the value of the contract. (noting that this can only be as a discrete/ separate stage where the contract is over a specific value for the specific category).
- 3.4.3 When procuring works, this capability, capacity, and experience assessment should, where appropriate be based on the **Common Assessment Standard** either in full or a modified version which as a minimum, meets the requirements of the Selection Questionnaire (SQ) to be used for non-works procurements.

3.5 Award Criteria (Evaluation Methodology)

- 3.5.1 Officers are required to design and effectively communicate the evaluation/ assessment methodology that will be applied to the tender responses submitted by suppliers.
- 3.5.2 This must include detailing whether the **Assessment Methodology** will be based on **lowest price** (where permitted in the tables above), **Price per Quality Point** method or **a price : quality ratio**. In either case, the following will apply.
 - (a) For quality and social value - the detailed questions include specific response guidance, the scoring methodology/ matrix, and the importance/ weighting to be applied to each question.
 - (b) For Price – details on how the value will be calculated and then how it will be evaluated (e.g., the weighting allocated to the price as a whole or parts therein or divided by the quality score).
- 3.5.3 Once the Tender Notice has been published, this Award Criteria cannot be amended; unless specifically allowed for in the Tender Notice, the amendment is not substantial, and the change is implemented before the last chance to submit tenders as per the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**.

3.6 Form of Tender

- 3.6.1 All Suppliers will be required to sign a disclaimer when submitting their tender; specifically relating to their conduct during the procurement, their adherence to the condition of tendering, the acceptance of the contract terms and their agreement to hold their price open for a specific amount of time.



3.7 Document Format

- 3.7.1 All documentation and communication will be issued and returned electronically, the documents may, therefore, be issued as attachment in Microsoft or Adobe formats (unless otherwise explicitly stated) or built into and answered in the e-tendering portal.

4 Procurement Process & Contract Management

4.1 Procurement Launch

- 4.1.1 The **Contracting Authority** is required to publish a full set of procurement/ Associated Tender Documents when they publish the Tender Notice. Table 2a & b above state when a notice is required and where it must be published.
- 4.1.2 Suppliers can access these opportunities on Central Digital Platform and the Authority's e-Procurement Portal.

4.2 Process Management

- 4.2.1 All competitive procedures (level 2 and above) must be managed through the **Contracting Authority's** e-tendering Portal; including all of the following activities.

(a) Communication with Suppliers

- (i) All communication with suppliers should be, as far as practicable, via electronic means; e.g., the e-tendering portal.

(b) Clarifications

- (i) The **Contracting Authority** reserves the right to clarify any omissions, ambiguities, or errors as part of its procurement procedure.
- (ii) All clarifications (by suppliers and the **Contracting Authority**) must be raised and managed through the e-tendering portal.
- (iii) Where a supplier asks a question, the questions and responses must be shared with all suppliers; an exception being where the supplier specifies that the question is commercially sensitive, and the **Contracting Authority** accepts this.
- (iv) Where, as part of the evaluation process, the **Contracting Authority** identifies something that appears erroneous, needs to be clarified or was omitted, this must also be raised through the e-tendering portal.
- (v) A record of all clarifications must be maintained.

4.3 Evaluation Process

- 4.3.1 The **Contracting Authority** will identify a team of Suitably Qualified and Experience Persons (SQEP) to carry out individual evaluations of their allocated question(s) in accordance with the Conditions of Participation/ Award Criteria questions as set out in the procurement documentation. All evaluators will then be required to attend a moderation session.
- 4.3.2 At some/ multiple points in the procurement, the **Contracting Authority** will/ must check a Supplier (and their supply chain's) suitability to deliver the contract. Where a supplier is assessed as **Excluded or Excludable** (mandatory or discretionary exclusion grounds) the supplier will/ may not be permitted to continue within the process.
- 4.3.3 At **Conditions of Participation** stage, depending on the route to market, the **Contracting Authority** may limit the number of suppliers to invite through to the



next round, depending on how the Competitive Tendering Procedure has been designed.

- 4.3.4 Additionally, at intermitted tender stages, the **Contracting Authority** may, through evaluation, limit the number of suppliers to invite through to the next round.
- 4.3.5 **At Award Stage**, in all covered procurements, the quality evaluation will be carried out by members of the panel independently of each other Before coming together for moderation. Price will be evaluated by Procurement.
- 4.3.6 The **Contracting Authority** has the right (but is not obliged) to seek clarification on the submissions as part of the evaluation process. Where this prerogative is utilised, all suppliers will be treated equally.

4.4 Negotiations

- 4.4.1 Negotiations will only be permitted where this is expressly stated in the procurement documentation, and this will be carried out in compliance with the stated process.
- 4.4.2 If a supplier attempts to negotiate a contract post award, where this is not permitted, the **Contracting Authority** may disregard the supplier and award the contract to the next ranked compliant supplier.

4.5 Preferred Supplier Identification & Assurance

- 4.5.1 Once a preferred supplier has been identified, the supplier suitability checks referenced above must be refreshed to ensure that they are still a suitable (not excluded) supplier.

4.6 Award Decisions and Approvals

- 4.6.1 Tender Record (Audit Trail)
 - (a) Throughout the life of the procurement, all decisions must be documented in a Project Tender Record; including the recommendation to award.
 - (b) This includes where a Direct Award is made.

4.7 Award Governance

- 4.7.1 Before suppliers can be notified of the recommendation, the decision to award must be approved in accordance with the **Contracting Authority's** scheme of delegation.

4.8 Supplier Notifications

- 4.8.1 Once the recommendation is approved, and before the Contract Award Notice is published, the **Contracting Authority** will collate and provide each supplier with an Assessment Summary (supplier feedback).
- 4.8.2 This summary must include the scores and the reason for those scores, for each of the award criteria, in consideration of the assessment methodology as set out in the procurement/ associated tender documents. Unsuccessful suppliers must also be provided with the same information relating to the successful supplier.

4.9 Standstill Period & Contract Notices.

- 4.9.1 For all Above Threshold/ Covered Procurements, the Authority must apply a **standstill period** before entering into the contract. (Excluding Utilities, Light Touch or contracts awarded under a framework, in which cases a standstill period is optional)



- 4.9.2 A **Contract Award Notice** must be published in accordance with **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**.
- 4.9.3 Additionally, where required under the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**, the **Contracting Authority** may be required to publish a **Contract Details Notice** within 30 days on entering into the contract.

4.10 Contract Execution (Thresholds/ Approval)

- 4.10.1 All contracts must be signed or executed in accordance with the following rules:
- 4.10.2 A record of the contract and a copy of all executed contracts must be added to the Contract Register (with physical copies of contracts executed as a deed stored securely).
- 4.10.3 All Works contracts must be executed as a Deed, regardless of Value
- 4.10.4 All contracts over £1,000,000 will bear the common seal of the Authority
- 4.10.5 Any contract under £1,000,000 shall be signed by the Director of Finance & Assets or an Officer with written delegated authority to sign in accordance with approved levels, or may be executed by affixing the seal of Authority in accordance with SOA15 (SOA 15 – Standing Orders for the Authority and its Committees)

5 Contract Management

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 Contracts must be managed in accordance with the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation** under which they were procured and the **Contracting Authority's** Contract Management Guidance Document.

5.2 Meetings & Performance Management

- 5.2.1 The **Procurement to Contract Management Handover Document** will be provided to the responsible Officer who will, where required, set up a series of meetings to kick off, administer and manage delivery of the contract. These meeting will as a minimum monitor and report on.
- (a) **Supplier & Supply Chain Suitability** – ensure the **Contracting Authority** is not contracting directly or indirectly with unsuitable (Excluded/ Excludable) suppliers.
 - (b) **Key Performance Indicators** – delivery against the agreed levels.
 - (c) **Contract Performance** – e.g., satisfactory delivery of the contract.
 - (d) **Contracting Authority Payment Performance** – the **Contracting Authority** is required to pay the Supplier within 30 days of receiving a valid/ undisputed invoice.
 - (e) **Supplier Payment Performance** - the Supplier is required to pay their supply chain within 30 days of receiving a valid/ undisputed invoice.
 - (f) **Supplier Contracts** – the supplier is required to enter into a legally binding agreement with suppliers on whom they are relying on to meet the technical, legal, or financial **conditions of participation**.
 - (g) **Modifications** – all modifications to a contract must be documented, along with their value and justification.

5.3 Contract Modifications



- 5.3.1 All modifications must be managed in accordance with the contract and in compliance of what is permitted under the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**.

5.4 Termination

- 5.4.1 In the event that any performance requirements are not being met, the **Contracting Authority** may terminate the contract in accordance with the stated contract clauses. Where required, this to be reported in accordance with the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**.

5.5 Notices

- 5.5.1 Where required under the **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**, the **Contracting Authority** may be required to publish a notice. These notices which may be required include.
- (a) **Contract Performance Notice** – used to report on KPIs and whether the contract is being delivered to the required standards.
 - (b) **Payment Compliance Notice** – used to publish the **Contracting Authorities** payment performance.
 - (c) **Contract Modification Notice** – used to publish detail of a proposed modification to a contract where there is an increase of decrease in the estimated contract value over a specific value.
 - (d) **Contract Termination Notice** – used where the **Contracting Authority** terminates a contract in full.

6 Other Procurement Considerations

6.1 Waivers & Exemption Approvals

- 6.1.1 Where an officer seeks to deviate from the requirements of this document an Exemption must be completed and approved in accordance with at least one of the following rules.
- 6.1.2 Competitive quotes or tenders are not required where any of the following apply:
- a) effective competition is prevented due to government control;
 - b) the supply or service is unique to a single supplier such as proprietary or patented goods or is deemed necessary due to the requirements of operational alignment and there is no satisfactory alternative;
 - c) the service or works are of a specialist nature and can only be carried out by one supplier;
 - d) the emergency requirements are brought about by events that could not have reasonably been foreseen;
 - e) if the goods or services are not procured there is a risk of danger to life or property or a major impact on the Authority or the public.
 - f) the market is such that effective competition does not exist and it can clearly be demonstrated that the proposed award represents best value for the Authority.
- 6.1.3 A waiver/exemption of up to £100,00 can be approved by the Director or Deputy Director of Finance & Assets, or Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive, using the standard Exemption form which is to be retained by Procurement Manager.
- 6.1.4 Waivers/Exemptions of more than £100,000 up to the relevant thresholds as set out in Procurement Act 2023 can only be approved by a Committee of the Authority.



- 6.1.5 Waivers/Exemptions are not permitted over the relevant threshold although the Procurement Act does permit exceptions in very limited circumstances: Schedule 2 – Exempted contracts: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/54/2024-05-23>
- 6.1.6 Where a contract is awarded under a waiver/exemption and is over £30k Inc. VAT, a Notice must be published on in accordance with **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**.
- 6.1.7 Where an Officer deems that the proposed expenditure is exempt from these rules, the Officer must complete a procurement exemption form regardless of value and/or category/sector. Procurement and Legal must approve this.

6.2 Collaborative Procurements

- 6.2.1 Where the **Contracting Authority** is required under its own powers or at the request of a partner authority to procure on its behalf, those procurements must comply with **Applicable Public Procurement Legislation**, and other relevant legislation more generally,
- 6.2.2 Each **Contracting Authority** must comply with their own rules with regards Financial, Procurement and delegated authority requirements; and then equally, their own scheme of delegation for contract signature.
- 6.2.3 The Procurement team will review all new procurement requirements, ensuring that all opportunities to collaborate with partner organisations are exploited where they offer benefits to the Authority and collaborate with partners to develop new joint contracts.

6.3 Purchase Cards

- 6.3.1 The **Contracting Authority** operates a purchase card facility; these are used for low value or one-off incidental spend where it is not efficient to add a supplier to the finance system and carry out a competitive procurement process. They may not be used as a means to disaggregate or bypass these rules.

6.4 Community Right of Challenge

- 6.4.1 Section 81 of the Localism Act 2011 permits relevant bodies to submit Expressions of Interest to provide Authority Services.

6.5 Disposal of Goods & Assets

- 6.5.1 **Land and Buildings** owned by the **Contracting Authority** shall not be disposed by lease or freehold without the prior approval of a Committee of the Authority.
- 6.5.2 Prior to approval being sought the following information must be provided:
- a) a complete description of all the land and/or property to be included in the disposal;
 - b) confirmation that the title of land and/or property is owned by the Authority;
 - c) the reason for the sale and any restrictions this may impose;
 - d) a report on any information which is held by the Authority in the previous use of the land which may affect the value (e.g. If the site was contaminated).
 - e) the estimated value of the land and/or property together with evidence of comparable properties in the location or by reference to other recent similar Authority transactions;
 - f) in cases where land and/or property is being sold as potential housing development, evidence that planning applications will be obtained prior to the completion of the disposal in order to obtain the best possible price for the land;
 - g) recommendations on the following:



- i. issues that need to be resolved before marketing the land and/or property can commence;
- ii. the preferred method of disposal (private treaty/ public auction/ formal tender);
- iii. the title to be transferred, and;
- iv. the minimum price the Authority is prepared to receive together with an asking price.

- 6.5.3 **Asset Disposals (other than Land/Property)**, If a corporate policy or contract is in place for disposal of the asset, this should be used.
- 6.5.4 Where the net book value of the goods is no more than £25,000 the disposal will be authorised by the Director of Finance & Assets. If the value exceeds £25,000 the disposal must be approved by a Committee of the Authority.
- 6.5.5 Except in circumstances in which the Director of Finance & Assets is authorising disposal in accordance with 6.5.4 in which case a donation to a charity approved by the Authority can be considered, disposal must be either by public auction or by obtaining three quotes from suitable contractors.
- 6.5.6 The Officer responsible for the disposal must ensure the Authority is receiving value for money, except in circumstances where the Director of Finance & Assets is authorising the disposal in accordance with 6.5.4; that the contractor is reputable; and the necessary anti-money laundering checks are in place by reference to the Director of Finance & Assets.

6.6 Grants

Application Process

- (a) The **Contracting Authority** is the recipient and administrator of funding from central government and potentially, other funders.
- (b) Where this funding is to be granted to organisations to deliver specific aims and objectives for the **Contracting Authority's** community, this will be administered through a formal process in accordance with the Authority's Financial Regulations..

6.6.2 Grant Agreements

- (a) Where a grant is issued, it must be awarded in accordance with the **Contracting Authority's** process for advertising, selecting, and awarding grants.
- (b) All grants must include:
- (i) Details of what the applicant has committed to provide for the funding.
 - (ii) Payment details including any payment conditions and frequency; and
 - (iii) Any flow-down requirements relating to obligations that apply to the **Contracting Authority**, including where relevant, reporting and clawback options.
 - (iv) All grants which include clawback options **MUST** be executed as a Deed.

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 10 December 2025

Report title: Health and Safety Annual Report 2024-25

Lead Member: Councillor Robin Stuchbury

Report sponsor: Graham Britten, Director of Legal and Governance

Author and contact: Calum Bell, cbell@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Noting

Recommendations: That the Fire Authority note the health and safety performance as detailed in the Health and Safety Annual Report for 2024-25

Strategic Enabler 1: Workforce – An inclusive, health and engaged workforce.

Executive summary: The Health and Safety Annual Report covers the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 including:

- Statistical Overview
 - Protecting Against Contaminants
 - Training Investment
 - Improved Safety and Compliance
-

Financial implications: If risks are not managed and controlled effectively, they can potentially lead to serious injury and breaches of legislation which can have significant financial implications by way of claims or fines for the Authority.

Risk management: Risk management involves understanding, analysing and addressing risk to ensure the Service can achieve its objectives.

Legal implications: The safety management system is well embedded throughout the Service, and its performance is subject to regular audit by peer fire and rescue services to ensure it remains fit for purpose, as well as ensuring compliance with legislation. If this scrutiny does not take place, it is possible that breaches of health and safety legislation may occur.

Privacy and security implications: The Data Protection Impact Assessment for this report has been reviewed. There are no personal details provided in this report and statistical data is generic rather than specific to protect the identity of those involved. The data collected as part of personal injury safety events is name, date of birth, gender and home address when required for Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR 2013) – a legislative requirement.

Furthermore, the Service has introduced another layer of data protection in the Safety Event Reporting processes and system, Visor, requiring individuals to confirm their written consent for the sharing of any personal information relating to an event they are involved in.

Duty to collaborate: Collaboration work continues with our Thames Valley FRS counterparts, and this report highlights the on-going collaboration work. Additionally, our H & S team are active members of the South-East region H & S Committee.

Health and safety implications: The report highlights safety event trends and details the analysis of these within the organisation. Ensuring the reporting of this data assists in the investigation process to create actions to prevent recurrence to ensure the safety of all staff and help ensure the working environment is as safe as it can be.

Environmental implications: The improvements made in regard to the Dangerous Substances, Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR 2002) compliance should not go unrecognised in terms of the additional environmental protections these changes have achieved.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications: The data collected as part of personal injury safety events is name, date of birth, gender and home address when required for RIDDOR 2013 reporting. Where the number of personal injury safety events is so low that there is the potential for affected individuals to be identified, they are reported generically rather than specifically. However, in the course of the H & S Team continually monitoring safety events, they also consider if there is any correlation with the events and any protected characteristics.

Consultation and communication: As this is a report on Health and Safety for the year 2024/25 there is no requirement to consult with other stakeholders. However, in addition to the stakeholder engagement as part of the internal approving processes, the report will be made available externally as part of the FA meeting bundle.

Approval pathway:

People Delivery Group – 11 November 2025

Strategic Leadership Board – 18 November 2025

Fire Authority – 10 December 2025

Background papers: None

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Health and Safety Annual Report 2024/25	



2024-25

Health and Safety Annual Report

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Forewords

I am very pleased to be writing the foreword to the Annual Health and Safety report.

The small, dedicated and professional Health and Safety team continues to support all our staff in providing a safe working environment. The performance is testament to how all employees understand that health and safety is paramount to themselves and to the public that we serve in an ever-changing environment.

As always, the key message is prevention. However, when a safety event occurs, no matter the scale, the Service is committed to reviewing and learning from the events and taking active steps to prevent any recurrence. Mindful at the same time as being committed to keeping the Service in a sustainable position for the future.

This is a credit to all employees and a great reflection on the Health and Safety Team's work!

Councillor Robin Stuchbury
Lead Member for Health and Safety
Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

"Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service are committed to ensuring the highest standards of health and safety are in place to keep our staff safe in the workplace. We take a proactive approach to risk management and invest in training and equipment to reduce the likelihood and severity of accidents and injuries. We also work closely with colleagues from across the fire sector to identify best practice. As such, it is really pleasing to see a positive trend in our overall safety events in 24/25.

Where safety events do occur, we investigate, and we monitor trends to promote a learning culture to support future activities. One of the big challenges the sector currently faces is the management of contaminants, and the Service continues to invest and improve in this critical area - making good progress in mitigating and managing the associated impacts, working collaboratively with colleagues from other fire and rescue services, so we can keep our staff safe.

A cost cannot be placed against death or serious injury, which is why we must continue to maintain a positive health and safety culture which is inclusive for all."

Louise Harrison
Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Executive summary

Our Performance: The safety event statistics for the year 2024/25 identify that there has been an **increase** in the number of Accident/Injuries **by 21.9 %** against the previous year, albeit, over the last five years this continues to be trending in a positive direction.

There has been a **25.5 % decrease** in the number of vehicle damage incidents, compared with the previous year, that said, this is an area we continue to monitor closely.

Protecting Against Contaminants

Building on the update last year, coordinated through the Technical dept, the Service has purchased several air quality monitoring devices which have been placed in a variety of environments. These devices are constantly monitoring and measuring the air quality, 24/7, for pollutants such as but not limited to, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and Particulates which could potentially present a hazard to our staff.

The H & S dept monitor the readings and will be using this information to further improve the existing control measures as appropriate.

Training Investment

As part of the ongoing commitment to ensure all staff are afforded the best opportunity to perform their role as safely as they can, working in partnership with the Organisational Development Dept, the Service has embedded core H & S related training into Career Pathways. This includes all staff, regardless of whether they are operational or support, from supervisory/team leader to senior managers and directors.

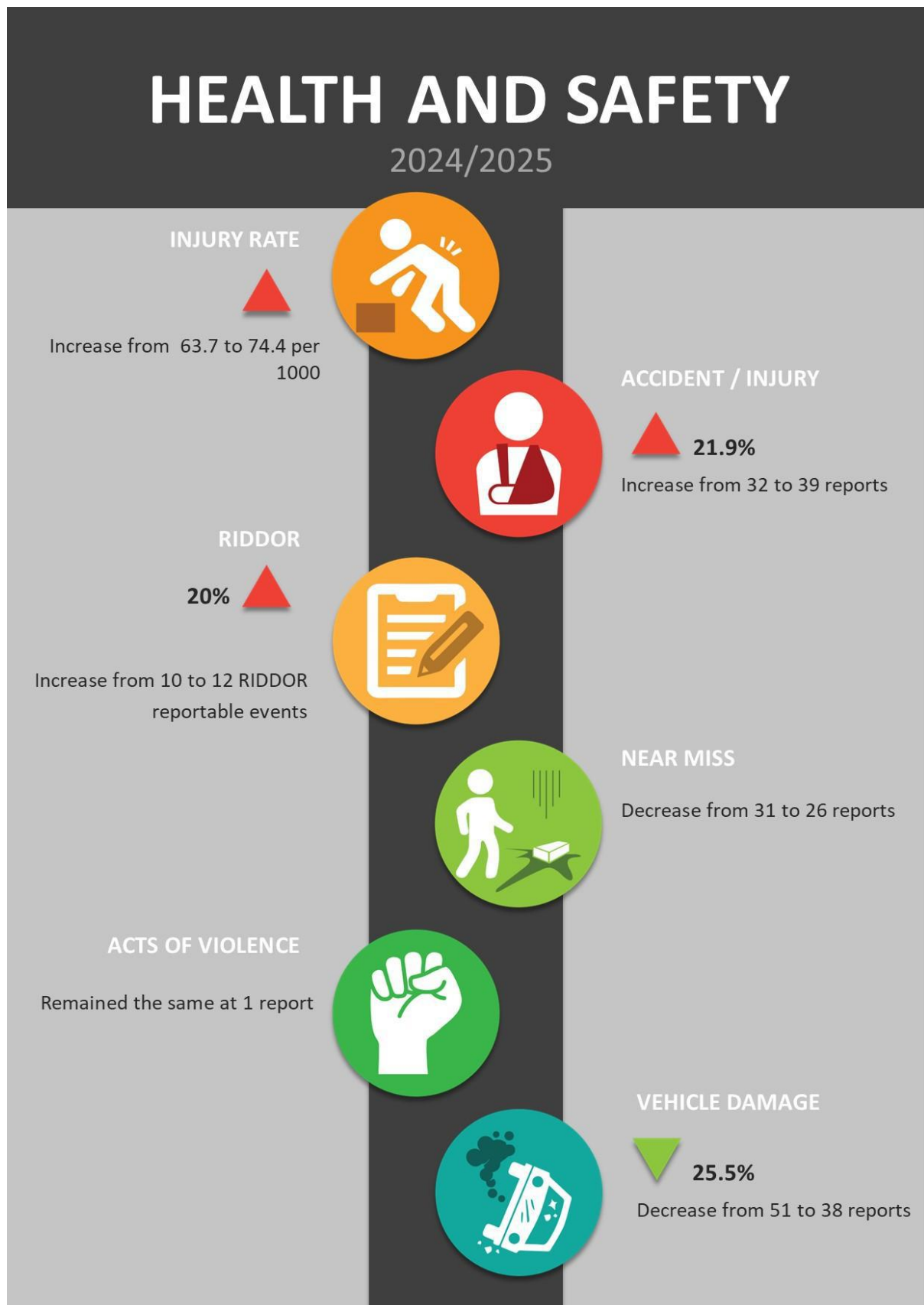
Improved Safety and Compliance

Following an audit in December 2024, it was identified that there was an opportunity to further enhance our compliance with the Dangerous Substances, Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR 2002).

A working group was formed and chaired by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO). Working in partnership; Property, Transport, Response and H & S Depts have now implemented a range of measures which enhance existing safety arrangements at all sites where we have Diesel and LPG tanks, ensuring compliance exceeds the minimum requirements.

This exemplifies how interdepartmental collaboration can quickly and effectively reduce risk and improve safety. The outcomes of this work are being shared with the SE Region.

Our performance at a glance:



Performance overview

In 2024/25 the number of incidents attended was 6,476 and the number of mobilisations, which also includes appliances providing cover as part of a Stand-by move, was 15,505. These figures do not include co-responding incidents or officer mobilisations.

Overall, there has been a reduction in two of the six H & S monitored categories. There has been increases in the number of personal injury safety events, the number of events that come under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) as detailed in "Our performance at a glance" graph above, and the injury rate. The number of acts of violence against BFRS staff has remained at the same level as 2023/24. It is pleasing to note that the vehicle damage safety events have reduced from 51 to 38. The number of 'near-miss' reports has decreased this year from 31 to 26. An overview of the figures is provided below.

Personal injury: The *injury rate* is determined by calculating the number of incidents reported; divided by the number of employees and multiplied by 100,000 as set out by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). For the year 2024/25 the *injury rate* is 74.4 per 1000 employees compared to 63.7 in 2023/24 which is a slight increase. In terms of the actual numbers of personal injury safety events, there has been an increase from 32 in 2023/24 to 39 in 2024/25.

The severity of a safety event is determined by the specified criteria in the Hazard, Near Miss and Safety Event Procedure 2025:

A **minor safety event** ranges from no injury to injuries resulting in minor first aid treatment and possibly some ongoing self-treatment but not requiring any professional medical treatment. (NB. A precautionary check-up by a nurse or doctor is not treatment for these purposes, even if at a hospital), or an event which has minimal financial loss or damage.

A **moderate safety event** is a broad category between Minor and Major, probably requiring professional medical treatment (excluding a precautionary check-up) and probably with short to medium term incapacity which will fully recover, or an event which has moderate financial loss or damage, moderate loss of reputation, business interruption, environmental implications.

A **major safety event** is a fatality or major injury as determined by the HSE list (or multiple injuries) probably requiring urgent or intensive and possibly ongoing professional medical treatment and likely ongoing debilitation or loss of physical or mental capacity, or an event which has major financial loss or damage, major loss of reputation, business interruption, high environmental implications.

Of the 39 personal injury safety events, 22 have been recorded as minor in nature and 16 as moderate, and 1 as major which was a hand injury as a result of RTC training.

It is to be highlighted that the procedure was reviewed in 2025 which means that 2 safety events that were classified as moderate which included an injury in an enclosed space as a result from training activities at the Fire Service College and a

fractured foot from RTC training would now be classed as a major safety event due to the criteria they meet.

It must also be highlighted that one personal injury event of the 39 occurred to a third party (work experience). This occurred from the individual assisting with the unloading of replacement scrap vehicle delivery where they did not put all of their PPE on. They then picked up a small piece of scrap metal and threw it at one of the cars windscreens. They believe this may have caused some of the glass to break off and hit his arm causing a small red mark on their bicep.

Of the 17 events which include major and moderate, 12 of these were as a result of training activities which highlights that this is where we see the most severe personal injury events. Out of the 39 personal injury safety events recorded, 22 occurred in training activities, with 15 of these being from operational training activities largely based on stations. During operational training safety events, the highest causations were 'inattention' and 'not following procedure'. 13 injuries occurred from routine activities and the highest causations from these were 'defective equipment, tools, machinery' and 'inadequate/unsuitable design'. All investigations will have actions addressed to the underlying causes.

Analysing the personal injuries further, 26% of personal injuries to BFRS employees were as a result of Handling/Lifting/Carrying which was the top causation of injury with 29% of personal injuries to BFRS employees were as a result of Sprains/Strains which was the most common type of injury.

Serious workplace injuries, occupational diseases and specified dangerous occurrences are reportable to the HSE under the RIDDOR Regulations.

The number of RIDDOR reportable events for 2024/25 is 12, which is an increase from 10 in 2023/24. Analysis of these events resulted in:

- 0 dangerous occurrences relating to Breathing Apparatus
- 3 "major" injuries (burn in an enclosed space, fractured foot, hand injury)
- 9 'over 7 days' sickness absences

2024/25 has seen a decrease in the number of vehicle safety events with 38 safety events compared to 51 in 2023/24. 29 of these were driving incidents and 9 of these were solely vehicle damage. Of the 29 driving incidents, 25 were of a minor nature, 3 were classified as moderate, and 1 as major which was where an appliance drove over a piece of debris in the road whilst responding to an incident which caused a puncture to the offside front tyre and ruptured the diesel tank. Of the 29 driving events, 25 events were as a direct result of driving from BFRS employees, and 4 were as a result of third parties causing damage to BFRS vehicles.

Slow speed manoeuvres continue to be a problem for fire and rescue services nationally; however, there was a slight increase in these from 8 events in 2023/24 to 10 events in 2024/25. These are still relatively low numbers in comparison to previous years.

In the category "Acts of violence against firefighters", there was 1 incident to report this year which was the same total as 2023/24. This event was as a result of

a member of the public shoulder barging an operational member of staff due to extinguishing the member of the public's bonfire after previously advising them that if they were called to reattend that it would be extinguished. From this incident, Thames Valley Police were contacted and attended the scene.

For the year 2024/25 there has been a decrease in the number of "near-miss" reports of 26, compared to 31 in 2023/24. The level of these is continuously monitored by the Department as well as analysing the number of hazard reports which is an indication of a proactive health and safety culture which totalled 19 for 2024/25 which is a significant increase from 6 for 2023/24.

This result highlights that there is a need to continue to highlight to staff to report more "hazard reports" as inevitably this will have a positive impact on reducing safety event numbers. This is now picked up as part of the planned *Toolbox-Talks* as well as being driven through Keeping Safe Briefs which is a quarterly document produced by the health and safety team and also through regular meetings with the FBU Health and Safety Representative.

Working Time Regulations compliance: The Resource Management Team monitor the hours worked by operational personnel focusing on those who have more than one contract with the Service. This is managed via the resource management system and has proved to be very successful in eliminating breaches of the Working Time Regulations.

A breach may occur when a worker does not have a full 24-hour uninterrupted rest break in any 7 days or 48 hours in 14 days, or the total of hours worked per week exceeds 84. The Service has implemented a limit on the number of hours worked at 78 per week to build in extra protection against fatigue for staff. Two periods of 24-hour uninterrupted rest are also given in line with the national terms and conditions for firefighters – the Grey Book.

From April 2024 to March 2025 there were 2212 Bank shifts worked and of those there were 0 breaches. This is the 3rd consecutive year running that there haven't been any breaches, which provides assurance of the positive work the Service has taken to ensure compliance with the Working Time Regulations.

Performance Statistical data:

The performance statistical data requested by the Home Office (now Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - MHCLG) for 2024/25 **relates solely to operational personnel** and is displayed as league tables of fire and rescue services with similar numbers of employees to provide a more accurate comparison of performance between BFRS and its peers.

There has been an increase in the **total number of persons injured** from 24 in 2023/24 to 32 in 2024/25. Of these, 21 occurred at training events, 8 during routine activities, 3 at fires.

The total number of **injuries at fires** has remained the same for 2024/25 as 2023/24 which was 3.

The total number of **injuries at non-fire incidents** has decreased from 4 in 2023/24 to 0 in 2024/25.

There has been an increase in the total number of **injuries during training events** from 15 in 2023/24 to 21 in 2024/25.

In terms of **injuries during routine activities** there has been an increase in the figures from 2 in 2023/24 to 8 in 2024/25.

Injuries over 7-day absence figures have increased from 5 in 2023/24 to 8 in 2024/25.

Finally, there were 3 *major injuries* for the year 2024/25.

Health and safety performance is reported quarterly at the Health and Safety Committee chaired by the Director of Legal and Governance. Key stakeholders, the representative bodies and the Representative of Employees are invited to attend these meetings.

Risk Management

Health and Safety audits and Fire Risk Assessments – are currently conducted across all stations and sites on an annual basis. However, this is changing to a more risk-based approach, see Look Forward section for more detail.

The audit form and processes have been updated to better align with BS EN ISO 45001 - Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems which identifies if a site has any non-conformities (minor or major), Opportunities for Improvement, areas of good practice, and provides a RAG status of compliance.

On submission of the completed audit both the Health and Safety and Property teams devise an action plan to remedy any issues that have been highlighted. Outcomes and progress on the identified actions are discussed at the quarterly Health and Safety Committee meetings.

Protecting Firefighters against Contaminants Background – In September 2021, the FBU launched their “DECON” campaign to help firefighters protect themselves and others from harmful contaminants encountered when fighting fires. “DECON” encourages firefighters to make simple changes at work and at home that can help to prevent cancer and other diseases.

This campaign and research were carried out in conjunction with Professor Anna Stec from the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) to investigate rates of cancer and other diseases in UK firefighters; understand the long-term health effects of fire contaminants and find ways to reduce exposure to contaminants whilst fighting fires.

In January 2023, following a survey of over 10,000 serving firefighters and researching Scottish firefighters’ death certificates it was reported that:

- Firefighters’ mortality rate from all cancers is 1.6 times higher than the general public
- Deaths from heart attacks are five times the rate of the general public, and three times the rate from strokes
- Firefighters are developing cancer at higher rates at younger ages
- Serving longer in the fire service increases risks of developing cancer
- Contaminants are causing higher rates of mental health issues, with firefighters three times more likely to suffer from depression, and twice as likely to suffer with anxiety

Internally, there is a dedicated project established to address the issue of contaminants management, and the H & S Department continue to support and provide professional advice.

Key achievements leading up to this reporting period:

- Issuing of dedicated Personal Protective Equipment Bins sited at every operational station.

- Issuing of advice on specialist medical codes for staff to give to their GP practice, identifying them as workers at greater risk, which should prompt GPs to consider cancer as the cause of presenting symptoms.
- All stations have now completed a draft Contaminants Zoning Plan, identifying areas that are at risk of low, medium, and higher levels of contamination, with controls in place to reduce this as far as is reasonably practicable.
- The provision of shower gel at every operational station to assist staff in removing any residual contaminants they may not have been able to do at the incident.

Building on these established mitigations, some key achievements in the last 12 months:

- Issuing of personal towels for use after showering, which supports the “Shower within the hour” aspiration and mantra.
- Issuing Personal Items Kit Bags for all operational staff to store spare clothes and washing products in so that they can wash and change into clean clothes immediately following an operational incident.
- Issuing of Pop-up Shelters on appliances to enable staff to get changed in privacy at an operational incident.
- Installation of air quality monitoring devices (inBiot) in a number of locations to benchmark and ensure we are doing all we can to improve the air quality in our sites.

As improvements are identified which can mitigate the risk of exposure to contaminants, the Service will take a consistent and positive approach across all its stations, sites and at incidents to ensure it enables staff to protect themselves within the workplace so far as is reasonably practicable.

The Service continues to work closely within the South-East Region Health and Safety group with regards to implementing measures to reduce the risk from contaminants within the workplace. This group is steered by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) in implementing any measures that they produce. The NFCC have initiated working groups for contaminants where the South-East region is leading on safe systems of work and risk assessments.

Department Restructure – Having identified the potential risks associated with having only one H & S Advisor, a business case was presented in Q 4 to regrade the Assistant role to Advisor. This proposal was approved, which enhancing the resilience within the Dept and increased the number of staff that could give the required level of technical advice without increasing establishment numbers.

Working With Others

Peer Audits: In line with the NFCC South-East Region Health and Safety Audit Protocol, along with the more recent Guidance for Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) specific H & S Audits, there is an agreement that every FRS in the South-East region will invite a peer H & S audit every five years.

This year one of the H & S advisors, along with three other H & S managers/practitioners, were invited into and audited Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service.

These audits follow the principles of ISO 45001, as such are classed as Stage 2 peer audits. These are extremely beneficial as not only do they highlight areas of good practice but also areas for development with the production of a report containing recommendations for improvement. The results of these audits will provide a benchmark against which FRSs can measure improvement.

Regional Arrangements: The H & S Department are active members of the NFCC SE Region H & S Committee who meet quarterly to share information, trends, best practice, receive and share information with the National H & S committee.

Local Arrangements: The Driving Centre, which is a partnership with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) delivering a common and shared approach to emergency response driving training, continues to monitor trends to ensure avoidable safety events can be reduced and improve driving performance and standards.

Safety Event Reporting System: The H & S Department continues to work closely with the developer of the Safety Event reporting and investigation system, Visor, as well as OFRS who also use it, to refine and improve the system. The introduction of automatically escalating the reporting when deadlines are not achieved, has had a significant impact on improving that KPI.

The Service has enhanced its compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) through making a change to Visor. There is now a requirement for individuals to confirm their written consent for the sharing of any personal information relating to a Safety Event they are involved in.

Health and Safety Training

Health and safety training is provided to all employees as part of an induction programme when joining the Service and regularly for Manual Handling and Display Screen Equipment as a legislative requirement.

The funding allocation for H & S related training is considered annually as part of the Service wide Training Needs Analysis (TNA), this year we have delivered the following specialist training and qualifications:

External providers

Two **Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) Managing Safely**, courses: total of 33 staff, operational and support.

One **National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) General Certificate** courses: total of 6 staff, in partnership with Oxford Fire and Rescue Service.

One **Level 2 accident investigator** course: total of 12 staff.

One member of the Health and Safety Department successfully completed two of the three units required to achieve the NEBOSH Level 6 National Diploma for Occupational Health and Safety Management Professionals and is working towards completing the third.

Internally

The Health & Safety Department have supported other workstreams and development through the delivery of risk critical training on the likes of the Safe to Command, Supervisory Managers acquisition and IOSH courses.

A Look Forward

Peer Audits: As mentioned previously, the Service is an advocate of the NFCC South-East Region Health and Safety Audit Protocol. With the support of the relevant Departments, the Team have planned and prepared for the Audit of the Service which will take place in April 2026. The outcomes and the final report of this will be shared more widely once it is available.

Station Audits: Following a similar approach to the Service's Protection Department, the H & S Department will be refining the current arrangements for station audits and will be looking to move from H & S auditing every site every year, to a risk-based audit programme; augmented by thematic and "with cause audits".

This will be informed by the likes of, number and type of safety events, premises and equipment defects and absence rate due to injury. This will not remove the requirement for every station to carry out its own annual H & S audit and review its Fire Risk Assessment.

Toolbox-Talks: Members of the H & S Department have been planning and delivering more station visits to share information, provide advice and support in person, which is hoped will reduce the number of Safety Events, increase the number of Hazard Reports and as well as further improve the quality of incident reporting.

Visor (Safety Event reporting system): Following the submission of a successful business case, funding was approved to purchase two more modules that sit within the current system. These will enable the following to be managed and stored in one shared place:

- Risk Assessments – Generic, Specific and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)
- Station and Site audits

This will improve information sharing, business continuity and risk reduction through the use of one approved common platform with the appropriate access permissions at various levels.

Protecting Against Contaminants: Building on the installation of air quality monitoring devices in a number of sites, the Service has committed to exploring the option of installing them in some operational appliances to gather more data on how it can further prevent staff from being exposed to contaminants.

Performance Indicators

Health and Safety Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)– 2024/25

The objectives set for the year 2024/25 were in line with the Public Safety Plan in terms of managing risk. They were:

1. Investigations to be completed within the set timeframes of 2 weeks for a level 1 investigation and 4 weeks for a level 2- achieved on 75% of occasions with a 10% tolerance.
2. Health and safety acquisition training to be completed prior to going into role on 85% of occasions and 100% of occasions on substantiation of the role.
3. Health and Safety training packages to be completed on 90% of occasions with a 10% tolerance.

Progress on these KPIs were reported on quarterly at the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meetings.

However, following the introduction of the new Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2030 a review of all KPI's was completed. From April 2025 new & update KPI's were introduced including 10 that H & S report internally at a Service level.

The performance against these is reported to the relevant Delivery Groups every month as well as the Performance Board.

As part of that review, the departmental objectives were realigned to better reflect more relevant measures that are within the H & S Team's control/influence which are:

- Station Audits – Moving to a more risk-based approach over a three-year cycle not every site every year. That said, this does not negate the requirement for every station/site to carry out its own annual H & S audit and review its Fire Risk Assessment.
- Toolbox-Talks – Every watch and department will have, in addition to mandatory H & S training, one face to face visit to provide updates on any changes and advice on keeping safe at work. This will be based over a three-year cycle and a target of two Toolbox-Talks per month.
- Risk Assessments – ensuring feedback and commentary is provided to the author within a maximum 21 days of receiving them.

These are reported on quarterly at every Health and Safety Committee meeting, the minutes of which are made available internally and externally on the BFRS website.

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority Wednesday 10 December 2025

Report title: Protection Assurance Report

Lead Member: Councillor Monger (Chairman)

Report sponsor: Assistant Chief Fire Officer Doug Buchanan

Author and contact: Area Commander Adam Burch – Head of Prevention and Protection

Action: Noting

Recommendations: That the Protection Assurance Report be noted.

Executive summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide the Fire Authority with assurance on the performance, progress and continuous improvement of the Protection function within Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS). It outlines how the Service is delivering against its statutory responsibilities, national standards and HMICFRS effectiveness expectations through proportionate, risk-based regulation and engagement activity.

The report evidences significant progress since the 2023 HMICFRS inspection, during which the Service was issued with a Cause of Concern (CoC) for Protection. This has now been closed, following demonstrable improvement in governance, leadership and performance management. The Service has embedded a robust Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP), implemented a strengthened Quality Assurance Framework and launched a comprehensive Business Engagement Framework which promotes education, prevention and proportionate enforcement.

Delivery against the 2025–2026 Protection Plan remains on track, with 26 of 42 actions completed and the remainder progressing toward completion by Quarter 4 of 2025–26. The Service continues to align its activity with national learning, NFCC guidance and the Fire Standards Board's Fire Standard for Protection.

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Ongoing investment in workforce development, partnership collaboration and digital transformation is central to maintaining momentum. The Service also recognises that its most significant risk is the ability to attract, recruit and retain qualified Fire Safety Officers in an increasingly competitive national market. This risk is being actively monitored and mitigated through strengthened succession planning and clear professional development pathways.

Financial implications:

Current Protection activity is funded through a combination of core resources and temporary external grant funding provided under the Protection Uplift programme. Any withdrawal of this grant would present a financial risk, as several fixed-term posts are currently reliant on this external support. Forward planning is in progress to incorporate critical roles and priorities into core budgets to ensure the sustainability of service delivery.

Risk management:

Protection is a critical component of the Service's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025–2030, supporting the reduction of risk in the built environment. Key risks include:

- National shortage of qualified and competent Fire Safety Officers.
- Increased demand arising from new building safety legislation.
- Potential reduction in capacity following withdrawal of external funding.

These are actively managed through workforce planning, succession development, and regional collaboration and are recorded and monitored within the directorate and corporate risk register.

Legal implications:

The Service has clear statutory duties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and Building Safety Act 2022. The report provides evidence that BFRS is fulfilling these duties through risk-based regulation, engagement and enforcement in line with the Regulator's Code and principles of Better Regulation.

Privacy and security implications:

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There are no privacy or security implications directly arising from this report. Data relating to premises and inspections is managed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Service's data protection policies.

Duty to collaborate:

The Service continues to work collaboratively with neighbouring fire and rescue services through the NFCC South East Protection Forum and with partners including local authorities, housing providers and the Building Safety Regulator. BFRS is actively contributing to the national consultation on the revised Fire Standard for Protection, helping to shape future standards and promote consistency across the sector.

Health and safety implications:

None arising directly from this report.

Environmental implications:

None arising directly from this report.

Equality, diversity and inclusion implications:

Workforce planning, recruitment and succession planning within the Protection function are aligned to the service's equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) objectives. Role reviews and succession planning have been used to open opportunities to a wider and more diverse pool of candidates, ensuring that technical fire safety roles are accessible to underrepresented groups. These efforts support fair and equitable access to Protection advice, education and enforcement services across all communities.

Consultation and communication:

The report has been developed in consultation with the Protection Management Team. It reflects ongoing communication with the NFCC, the Southeast regional network and local authority partners to ensure consistency with national policy and best practice.

Background papers:

[Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service 2023–2025 HMICFRS Report](#)

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[Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: return to default phase of monitoring](#)

[Community Risk Management Plan \(CRMP\) 2025–2030](#)

[Fire Standards Board – Fire Standard for Protection \(FSD-PRO01, September 2021\)](#)

[HMICFRS 2023-2025 Revisit Update](#)

[HMICFRS Effectiveness Assessment Framework](#)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Protection Assurance Report	N/A
2	Protection Case Studies	N/A



**Buckinghamshire
Fire & Rescue Service**

Making a difference together



Protection Assurance Report

November 2025

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1. Executive Summary

The Protection Assurance Report provides an overview of the Service's progress in delivering its strategic priorities to further strengthen and build upon the improvement journey made to ensure we remain effective in protecting people from risk in the built environment.

The report highlights how the Service continues to enhance its ability to reduce risk, improve compliance and protect the public across a wide range of premises through strong leadership, data-driven decision-making and collaboration.

Since the last HMICFRS inspection in 2023, the Service has made significant progress in embedding a robust Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP), aligned with the revised Protection Strategy and the [Community Risk Management Plan \(CRMP\) 2025–30](#). This ensures that Protection resources are directed towards the highest-risk premises underpinned by improved data systems, enhanced performance monitoring and a Quality Assurance process that drives consistency and transparency. Alongside these system improvements, we continue to invest in developing a competent, confident and qualified Protection workforce, recognising the ongoing national challenges in recruiting, retaining and developing skilled professionals within this specialist area.

The [Annual Delivery Plan 2025–26](#) is currently being delivered and sets out key strategic actions designed to strengthen our Protection function further. This includes embedding and evaluating our business engagement programme, strengthening partnership arrangements within multi-occupied residential buildings, developing team resilience through succession planning, and reviewing systems and processes to enhance productivity and efficiency.

Notable progress has been achieved through:

- Refining and enhancing the targeting of high-risk premises using a live, data-informed RBIP.
- Expanding business engagement activity through locally focused initiatives and closer integration with operational crews.
- Enhancing the Premises Risk Management System (PRMS) to improve efficiency, data quality and assurance.
- Strengthening training, mentoring and succession planning to build long-term resilience and sustain workforce capacity.

The Service has successfully addressed the three Causes of Concern (CoC) and associated Areas for Improvement (AFIs) identified by HMICFRS, embedding the outcomes into business-as-usual processes. Key achievements include the implementation of a clear risk-based inspection methodology, improved confidence in enforcement activity and a fully established business engagement framework.

Looking ahead, the Service remains committed to maintaining a resilient, capable and responsive Protection function. We will continue to monitor performance, adapt to emerging risks and align our approach with national standards, ensuring that the service

continues to deliver an effective, efficient and sustainable Protection capability which keeps our communities safe.

2. Introduction and Background

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the progress, improvements and ongoing development within the Protection function. It outlines the actions taken in response to inspection findings, demonstrates strengthened governance and leadership arrangements and reaffirms the Service's commitment to delivering effective fire protection across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Fire Protection is a statutory duty under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and subsequent building safety legislation. Through its Protection function, the Service ensures that those responsible for premises comply with fire safety law, helping to reduce the likelihood and impact of fires in the built environment.

This work directly supports the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) by reducing risk to life, property, and the environment. Through a combination of engagement, education and regulation (enforcement where necessary), the Protection Team builds safer communities and provides assurance that local businesses, landlords and public bodies are meeting their fire safety responsibilities.

In its 2023 inspection, HMICFRS judged that Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service was *"Inadequate"* at protecting the public through fire regulation. The inspection identified that strategic direction, prioritisation and consistency within Protection required urgent improvement.

HMICFRS required the Service to produce, within 28 days, an Action Plan that addressed the following Cause of Concern (CoC):

- Defined a clear and risk-based inspection programme (RBIP) within a revised Protection Strategy aligned to the forthcoming Public Safety Plan.
- Ensured staff delivered proportionate activity against risk-based targets.
- Strengthened recording and assurance systems to prioritise high-risk premises.
- Embedded a Quality Assurance (QA) process to ensure audit consistency and standardisation.

This CoC was formally closed on 7 March 2025, following sustained evidence of improvement, progress monitoring and external assurance.

HMICFRS also identified the need to address the following Areas for Improvement (AFIs):

1. Review the response to false alarms to ensure effective use of resources.
2. Improve staff confidence and competence in using enforcement powers.

3. Strengthen engagement with businesses and large organisations to promote compliance.

The [State of Fire and Rescue 2024-25 report](#) published in November 2025 from HMICFRS provides important context for understanding the national landscape of Protection activity. It highlights that, while most services are improving their ability to target risk through RBIPs, challenges remain in consistently identifying and auditing high-risk premises, particularly hospitals, care homes and buildings with sleeping accommodation, due to varying data quality and risk scoring methods.

HMICFRS continues to highlight the need for:

- Greater consistency and quality assurance in fire safety audits.
- More robust RBIP planning and delivery.
- Stronger engagement with businesses to promote understanding of fire safety responsibilities.

Protection teams across England are facing growing pressures from expanding legislative duties, particularly following the Building Safety Act 2022 and the ongoing Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations. Services are now expected to support remediation of unsafe medium and high-rise buildings while maintaining existing commitments to consultations, audits and enforcement.

Recruitment and retention also remain national challenges, as demand for qualified Protection officers continues to exceed supply across both the public and private sectors. Building and maintaining a skilled workforce is essential to sustaining performance and meeting increasing expectations.

Against this backdrop, Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has made substantial progress in strengthening its governance, leadership and data-driven prioritisation within Protection. The improvements achieved since 2023 align with national best practice and position the Service well to continue developing an effective, resilient and sustainable approach to protecting people from risk in the built environment.

3. Responding to the HMICFRS Findings

Following the [2023 HMICFRS inspection assessment](#), the Service has made significant progress in transforming its Protection function. Strengthened governance, clearer accountability and improved performance management have created a more focused and resilient approach to delivering statutory fire safety duties.

Targeted investment in people, systems and partnerships has enhanced our capacity to identify and manage risk more effectively across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Through structured performance monitoring, stronger leadership oversight and a commitment to continuous improvement, the Service has embedded a more proactive and intelligence-led model of fire protection.

The Service has also taken decisive action to address the specific CoC identified by HMICFRS. A comprehensive action plan was developed and delivered to target each area requiring improvement. All key actions have now been completed, with several embedded into business-as-usual (BAU) arrangements and subject to ongoing quality assurance and performance monitoring.

Clearly Define and Align the Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP)

The Service has reviewed and updated its Protection Strategy. A new risk-based inspection methodology and database have been implemented, creating a live system which enables dynamic targeting of high-risk premises and improved data intelligence. The Protection Strategy 2025–2030 has been aligned with the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) to ensure a fully integrated and evidence-led approach to managing protection resources.

Ensure Resources Are Effectively Managed to Reduce Risk

The Service has developed clear RBIP guidance, supported by new performance measures which monitor both audit volumes and outcomes to ensure that resources are being directed toward the highest-risk premises. Three Fire Safety Business Engagement Apprentices and three Business Fire Safety Advisors have been appointed, increasing capacity for engagement with local businesses while allowing qualified Inspecting Officers to focus on complex, high-risk work. These developments have led to measurable improvements in productivity, targeting and consistency.

Strengthen Systems and Quality Assurance (QA)

The Service has strengthened its data systems, processes and governance to support consistency and assurance in protection activity. The Premises Risk Management System (PRMS) is now fully embedded, with dedicated standardisation sessions and briefings held to ensure consistent data input and reporting.

A robust QA process is now in place, supported by updated procedures aligned with national best practice. QA activity is reviewed through regular governance meetings and findings inform continuous improvement and staff development. Additional administrative support has also been introduced to enable specialist officers to focus more time on risk-based activity.

Collectively, these actions have [addressed all areas of concern raised by HMICFRS](#) and have resulted in stronger governance, more effective use of data and resources and improved consistency across Protection functions. The Service is now well positioned to sustain these improvements through continued monitoring, assurance and integration into BAU arrangements.

Table 1: HMICFRS Causes of Concern – Assurance Summary

HMICFRS Cause of Concern	Key Actions Delivered
Clearly define the Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) within a revised Protection Strategy aligned to the CRMP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised Protection Strategy 2023–2025 developed with NFCC peer support and approved by Fire Authority. • New RBIP methodology and live database implemented to target high-risk premises. • Protection Strategy 2025–2030 aligned with CRMP to ensure integrated, evidence-led delivery.
Ensure the increased number of staff complete proportionate activity to reduce risk and work to effective targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised RBIP and KPI framework introduced to measure both volume and quality of audits. • Three Business Engagement apprentices and three Business Fire Safety Advisors recruited, enhancing local business engagement and freeing qualified officers for complex work. • Monthly and quarterly performance monitoring established to ensure effective resource targeting.
Ensure the system for recording fire safety activity is robust and supported to enable prioritisation of highest risk, with effective quality assurance processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRMS reviewed and improved for consistency. • New QA process implemented and embedded into BAU. • Updated Protection procedures aligned with national best practice. • Additional admin support introduced to enhance efficiency.

In addition to addressing the three CoCs, the Service has also made strong progress in responding to the Areas for Improvement (AFIs) identified by HMICFRS. Each AFI was incorporated into the Service's Protection Action Plan and aligned to the Annual Delivery Plan to ensure oversight, accountability and timely delivery. All three AFIs have now been completed.

- **Review of Response to False Alarms**

A comprehensive review of the Service's response to false alarms has been completed. The project included a pilot scheme, data analysis, public consultation, and Fire Authority scrutiny. A revised Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) policy has been developed and the project has now transitioned to BAU, supported by ongoing KPI monitoring to ensure operational and Protection resources are used effectively. The number of mobilisations to false alarms in business premises has dropped significantly since the introduction of the new policy.

- **Confidence and Use of Enforcement Powers**

The Service has strengthened its enforcement framework through updated policy and clear guidance. We have engaged a Service Legal Advisor (SLA) to strengthen legal support for fire safety enforcement and investigations. The SLA provides advice on notices, prosecutions, policy updates, and delivers legal training. Licensed Access for selected managers will ensure timely advice. All complex or high-risk cases should involve the SLA. A new KPI set is in place to monitor enforcement activity, supported by QA processes. Staff feedback through pulse surveys and one-to-one discussions confirms growing confidence in applying the full range of enforcement powers appropriately and consistently.

- **Planning and Engagement with Businesses and Large Organisations**

The Service has developed and embedded a comprehensive Business Engagement Framework, underpinned by a delivery plan and KPI measures. Collaboration between the Protection and Communications teams has led to the introduction of business-focused campaigns, standardised engagement materials and a calendar of targeted initiatives. A Business Engagement Tracker and new statistical reporting tools are now in place to support evidence-led planning and continuous improvement.

Table 2: HMICFRS Areas for Improvement – Assurance Summary

HMICFRS Area for Improvement (AFI)	Key Actions Delivered
Review response to false alarms to ensure Protection and Operational resources are used effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot completed and evaluated, with public consultation and Fire Authority review. • Revised AFA policy developed and integrated into Protection guidance. • KPI introduced to monitor mobilisation to false alarms.
Ensure staff have confidence to use the full range of enforcement powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated policy and guidance framework implemented. • Enforcement training delivered with legal support provider. • KPIs and QA process established to monitor enforcement activity. • Staff feedback and pulse survey indicate improved confidence.
Work with local businesses and large organisations to share information and expectations on compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Engagement Framework and Delivery Plan established. • Targeted communications, campaign materials, and engagement calendar introduced. • Tracker and KPIs developed to measure outcomes.

4. Building on our Continual Improvement Journey

With the introduction of the new CRMP, the Service has been able to clearly define how it will deliver its strategic objective:

“To enhance the safety and wellbeing of our community by reducing risks and incidents in the built environment.”

With approximately 30,000 premises falling under fire safety legislation across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, our approach combines education, engagement and enforcement, encouraging responsible persons to maintain compliance through advice and partnership, while proportionate enforcement ensures public safety is upheld.

This approach is designed to achieve three key outcomes:

- Ensure compliance with fire safety legislation and deliver consistent, proportionate regulation.
- Reduce the incidence and severity of fire-related events in business and public premises.
- Develop a competent, capable and resilient Protection workforce which meets future needs.

The Service also recognises the key challenges it faces, including the increasing volume and complexity of premises, non-compliance by responsible persons due to financial or awareness barriers, and frequent legislative changes that require rapid adaptation and staff upskilling.

In response to these challenges, the Protection function has implemented a range of targeted actions to build on its improvement journey. Policy and process reviews continue to be updated in line with national guidance, while the RBIP has been strengthened to prioritise the highest-risk premises. Business engagement has been enhanced through targeted outreach to promote compliance and awareness, and responsive service delivery ensures timely action on consultations and complaints. Continuous QA underpins all activity, providing confidence in the consistency and standard of Protection work.

The Protection Delivery Plan for 2025–2026 further builds on this progress, focusing on embedding sustainable improvements, enhancing collaboration and developing team resilience. Key strategic objectives include:

- Embed and evaluate our business engagement programme
- Strengthen partnership arrangements to effectively manage, resolve and enforce within multi-occupied residential buildings
- Develop Protection team resilience through succession planning
- Trial the use of operational station-based staff resolving fire safety complaints
- Review of the PRMS system and associated processes to identify opportunities to enhance productivity and efficiencies

Of the 42 tasks outlined in the plan, 26 have been completed and 16 are currently in progress with all actions remaining on track for delivery by Quarter 4 of 2025–26. Each task has been systematically mapped against the [HMICFRS Effectiveness Assessment](#), ensuring alignment with inspection expectations and providing assurance of effectiveness across all areas of Protection activity.

Significant areas of progress include:

Business Engagement Programme

The [Business Engagement Framework](#) is now fully established, with clear success measures and targeted local delivery.

The framework offers a structured approach to engaging with businesses of all sizes. It is designed to help businesses:

- Reduce the likelihood of formal enforcement action by raising awareness and providing access to clear advice
- Better understand their legal fire safety responsibilities
- Take proactive steps to reduce the risk of fire in workplaces and public premises

The Framework offers clear advice and guidance to businesses and responsible persons, ranging from general fire safety information to tailored support through the Primary Authority Scheme (PAS) a government initiative that allows businesses to receive assured, consistent regulatory advice from a single local authority. It promotes a risk-based approach to engagement, using data and emerging trends to target support where it is most needed. Collaboration is central to the Framework, with close working relationships established across local authorities, industry groups and national campaigns. Communication is designed to be accessible and inclusive, delivered through visits, workshops, social media and digital platforms to maximise reach and impact.

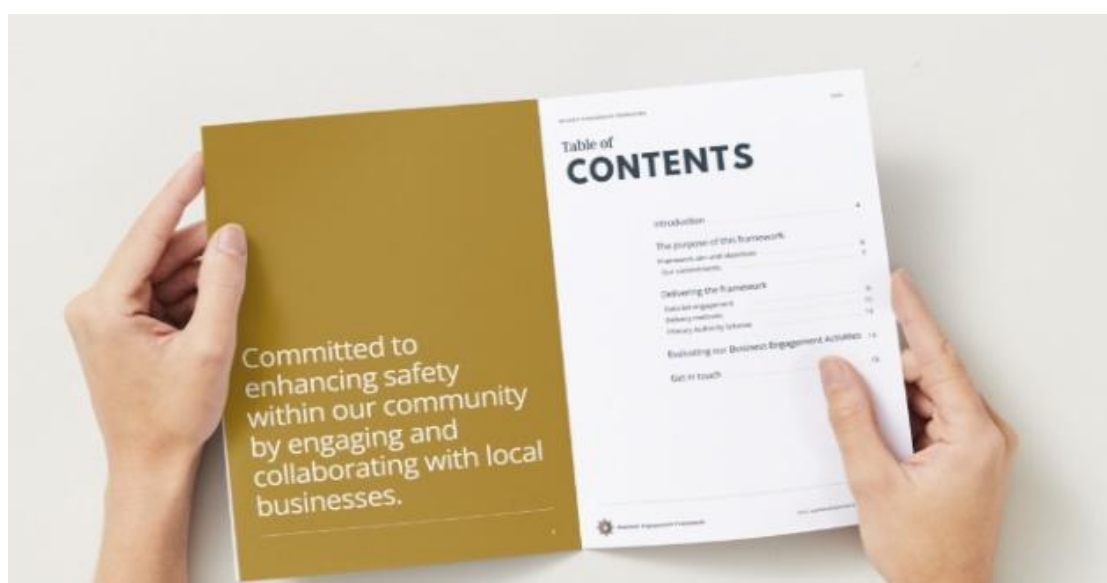


Figure 1: Business engagement framework

Business Engagement Advisors continue to work closely with operational colleagues, embedding recording mechanisms through Service Delivery Area (SDA) Station Plans. A revised structure has been implemented to align with organisational priorities, ensuring resilience and consistency in delivery.

We continue to invest in materials and resources which enhance our engagement activity. This includes updated public-facing literature, the introduction of tablets to support real-time recording of business engagement, and a new branded event stand to improve visibility at community and business events. These initiatives, due for delivery this year, are designed to strengthen the quality and consistency of our engagement, ensuring our messaging remains clear, professional and aligned with the Service's values and prevention objectives.



Figure 2: Business engagement Team stand

The delivery plan has been broken down into quarterly projects.

- **Hospitality:** The focus will be on pubs, restaurants, takeaways and other premises operating with late licenses.
- **Open Air Events:** Work centred on festivals and fairs, including those linked to farming and agriculture. Also consider schools and the summer holiday period in relation to unwanted fire signals.
- **Fire Safety:** Activity aligned to the NFCC calendar, including fire doors, risk assessments, electrical testing and staff training.
- **Retail Business:** Support around events such as Halloween, Bonfire Night and Christmas, with specific attention to retail storage and the use of temporary staff.

These themes are guided by data and information from inspecting officers, also feeding from enforcement action and the NFCC calendar.

These themed focuses are supported by regular social media posts which can be adapted in line with any trends that develop.

The Service's Primary Authority Scheme (PAS) continues to grow, providing consistent fire safety advice to partner organisations. A structured governance model has been established to manage partnerships effectively and ensure resource efficiency, compliance, and reputational assurance.

PAS directly supports BFRS's Business Engagement Programme by:

- Providing businesses with tailored advice and proactive support to reduce the likelihood of enforcement action.
- Ensuring clear, consistent and transparent guidance across multi-site operators.
- Strengthening collaboration with key partners to improve overall fire safety compliance.

Through PAS, BFRS enhances its ability to target engagement, improve risk awareness and deliver measurable outcomes in line with national expectations for Protection effectiveness.

Multi-Occupied Residential Buildings

Strong progress has been made in partnership working with local authorities and housing providers. A comprehensive list of buildings requiring remediation has been compiled and joint working structures are in place. A draft Partnership Working Agreement (PWA) is progressing toward final sign-off by December 2025, supported by a clear triage and prioritisation process for managing remediation and enforcement activity. This approach should ensure we are more aligned to deal with issues and represents a shared commitment to protect residents and communities across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes through co-ordinated, transparent and proportionate regulation of fire safety and housing standards.

Protection Team Resilience and Succession Planning

A full competency review and training needs analysis have been completed, supported by refreshed role profiles and succession planning for key positions. Out-of-hours support arrangements have been introduced and pay benchmarking across neighbouring services is underway to ensure competitiveness and retention. Work to embed professional development pathways continues as part of ongoing workforce planning. Further details about workforce development can be found in Section 9 on page 21.

Station-Based Fire Safety Trials

The trial integrating operational crews into the resolution of low-risk fire safety complaints has progressed well, with key process documents reviewed and enhanced. Firework and during-performance inspections are being reintroduced and tailored training materials are in development to strengthen local delivery and improve fire safety awareness among

operational personnel. The processes for recording and escalating concerns have also been refined to ensure Protection activity is effectively integrated within wider service delivery.

Protection Risk Management System (PRMS) Review and System Improvement

The review of the PRMS has highlighted several opportunities to improve efficiency and streamline processes. Broader KPIs have been introduced to enhance visibility of all Protection activity, while ongoing work is focused on refining templates, correspondence and data capture methods. Collaboration with system developers continues to prioritise key functional enhancements, supported by a dedicated working group. Funding has been secured to enable these improvements to be fully costed and delivered by March 2026.

Overall progress across the 2025-26 Delivery Plan is on track, with the majority of actions either completed or progressing to plan. The Service continues to demonstrate improvement in how it manages risk, delivers targeted business engagement and strengthens capability within the Protection function. Workstreams focused on partnership collaboration, digital systems and workforce development will remain key priorities through the remainder of the year to ensure full delivery by Q4 of 2025–26.

Further details are provided in the 2025–2026 Protection Delivery Plan assurance assessment table, which can be found in Appendix A.

To continue building on the progress achieved, a regional peer review was commissioned and delivered in Q1 2025-26, with clearly defined Terms of Reference, to provide independent scrutiny and ensure that improvements within the Protection function were sustained and further enhanced. The review was conducted by Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), which had itself made significant improvements following their own HMICFRS assessment.

The review confirmed several positive developments, including stronger leadership visibility and direction, improved prioritisation and planning through the RBIP and consistent audit quality supported by robust feedback processes.

Of the 11 key actions arising from four recommendations in the peer review, four have been completed and seven are in progress as of 1 November 2025. All actions remain on track for delivery by Q4 of 2025–26, with further details provided in Appendix B.

5. Fire Standards Board (FSB) – Fire Standard for Protection

The role of the Fire Standards Board is to oversee the identification, organisation, development and maintenance of professional Standards for fire and rescue services in England. The standards are developed and maintained by the Fire Standards Board (FSB), in collaboration with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Home Office.

Each standard is subject to periodic review and consultation to ensure it remains current, evidence-based and reflective of emerging risks, learning and national policy developments.

A comprehensive gap analysis against the current [Fire Standard for Protection](#) has been completed. This review has provided reasonable assurance that the Service is meeting the vast majority of the standard's requirements.

The only area currently assessed as 'progressing towards' relates to the adoption of the Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators. While BFRS has not yet formally embedded this framework into local policies, procedures and training materials, work is well underway to align with its principles. The Service intends to pursue third-party accreditation for Fire Safety Officers through the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE), providing independent validation of professional competence.

The Protection Enforcement and Training Manager has been tasked with scoping the implications and requirements of this approach to ensure the Service achieves full compliance and sustained assurance against the national standard.

The current Fire Standard for Protection is under review with a revised draft out for consultation. BFRS has reviewed the proposed changes and is working closely with neighbouring fire and rescue services across the South East Region to provide coordinated feedback and help shape the revised standard.

6. Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) & Audit Performance

A fire safety audit involves a systematic examination of a premises and its supporting documentation to assess compliance with fire safety legislation. During an audit, responsible persons are required to demonstrate that they are meeting their duties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. These audits are essential in ensuring that high-risk buildings are effectively managed, risks are mitigated and occupants are protected.

The graph below illustrates a year-on-year improvement in audit volumes conducted by Fire Safety Inspection Officers.

In 2023, the team completed 269 audits. This rose to 624 audits in 2024, representing a 132% increase reflecting the team's improved capacity and targeted focus on high-risk premises. As of 31 October 2025, 563 audits have been completed, putting the team on track to reach approximately 700 by year-end and further demonstrating the Service's commitment to proactive, evidence-driven protection activity.

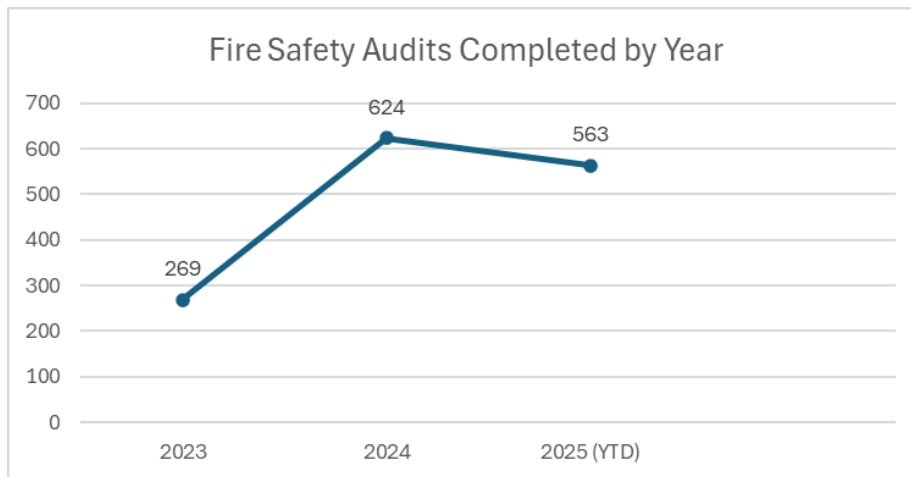


Figure 3: Number of Fire Safety Audits Completed across the last three calendar years

The RBIP prioritises audits of premises assessed as very high or high risk, drawing on multiple internal and external datasets to inform targeting. The Service aims to inspect all very high-risk premises annually, and high-risk premises at least once every three years, while also maintaining the flexibility to undertake reactive audits where required.

Priority is always given to very high and high-risk premises wherever possible, ensuring that Protection resources are directed to locations where the potential impact of non-compliance is greatest.

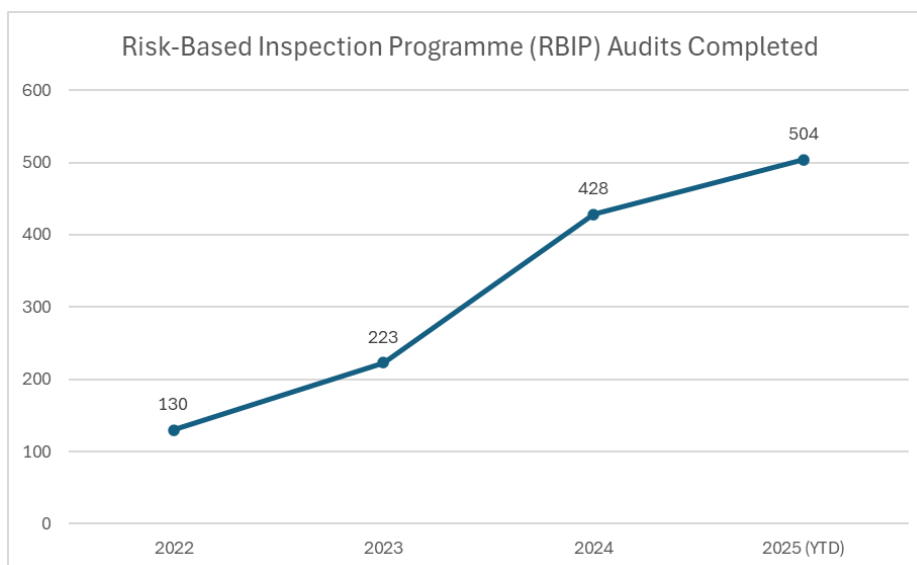


Figure 4: Complete RBIP audits per calendar year

Year to date, 69% of audits have been focused on high-risk premises, demonstrating a sustained commitment to targeting the highest-risk occupancies. This measure provides assurance that the team is effectively scheduling and prioritising audits in line with the RBIP methodology.

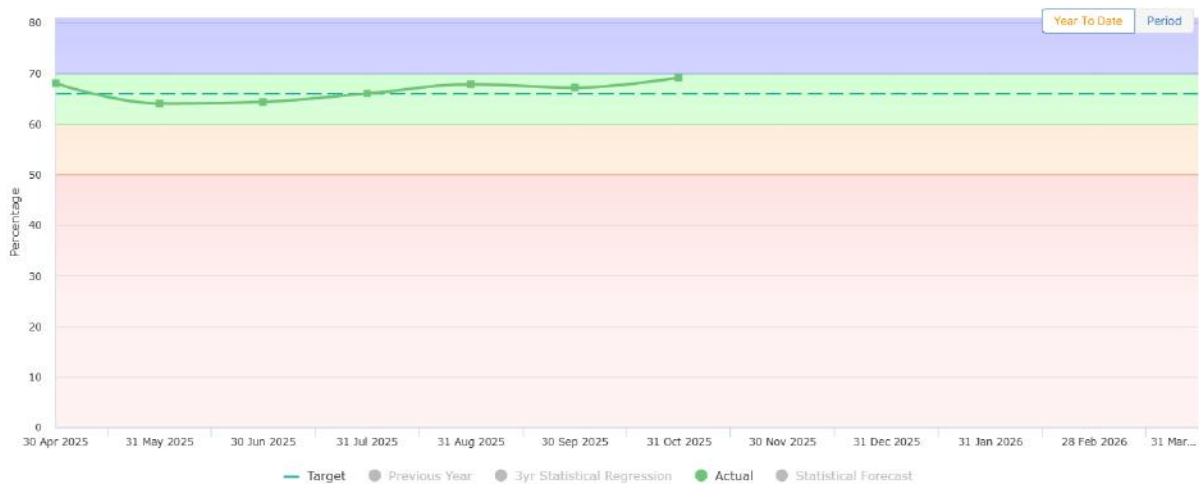


Figure 5: % of Audits completed in High-Risk Premises types

To ensure that the Protection Team is effectively targeting the right premises it is essential to consider how each premises is managed from a fire safety perspective. Our focus is on premises which require greater support, guidance or enforcement to improve compliance and targets are set accordingly to reflect this priority.

One key measure we monitor is the volume of audits resulting in non-satisfactory outcomes. Year to date, 70% of audits have resulted in non-satisfactory findings, indicating that inspections continue to identify significant levels of non-compliance. Our target is set at 66% and the current figure demonstrates we are meeting this goal, highlighting the positive impact of focused inspections. The proportion has stabilised at a high level this year, showing sustained attention on higher-risk or historically underperforming premises.

The consistent rate of non-satisfactory outcomes reflects both effective risk-based targeting and growing confidence among officers in identifying and evidencing deficiencies. As staff continue to progress through competency frameworks, this approach strengthens assurance that inspections are both rigorous and proportionate.

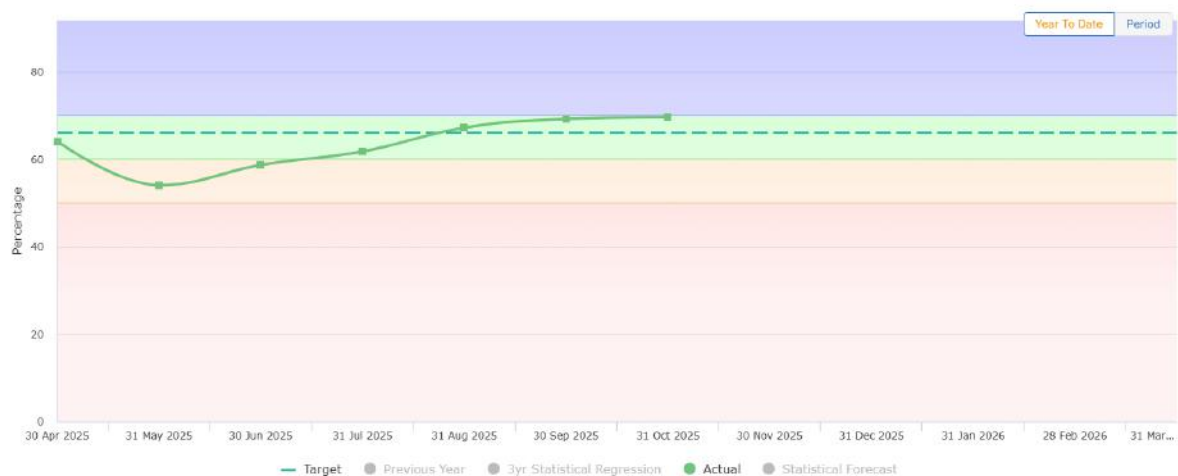


Figure 6: Audits Resulting in Non-Satisfactory Outcomes 25/26

Quarterly Protection and Data Intelligence meetings are now embedded in governance arrangements, providing oversight, promoting data-led decision-making and enabling timely adjustments to inspection priorities. An annual review process ensures the programme remains current and responsive to emerging risks, while strengthened performance metrics allow monitoring of both audit volumes and outcomes.

7. Business Engagement Activity

The Protection team actively tracks business engagement activity on a monthly basis to monitor fire safety outreach across the service area. Each engagement, whether a visit, email, telephone call or mixed media approach, is recorded capturing key details such as premises, advisor, type of engagement, FSEC rating, time spent and outcomes. This process allows the team to evidence activity, monitor engagement quality and identify follow-up actions, including guidance provision, risk assessments and staff training.

Examples of recent activity include:

- **Premises types engaged** included shops, licensed premises, hotels, residential buildings and public facilities.
- **Engagement approaches** ranged from fully engaged discussions with responsible persons, to partial engagement with employees, to brief advice or leaflet distribution when premises were closed or staff unavailable.
- **Duration of interactions** varied from a few minutes for leaflet drops to over an hour for complex premises or multi-business sites.

This structured tracking ensures that the Protection team can evidence proactive engagement, target higher-risk premises effectively and provide practical learning opportunities for apprentices. It also allows management to monitor trends, measure impact and demonstrate the service's commitment to improving fire safety across the community.

Since July 2025, operational crews have been actively recording all business fire safety interactions using a dedicated tracker. This system captures engagement following Site Specific Risk Assessments (SSRAs), preplanned business events or post-incident visits, allowing the service to track activity by Service Delivery Area and monitor the quality and outcomes of engagements. Each entry records the type of premises, type of activity, whether leaflets were provided, basic fire safety checks carried out and whether minor, significant or major fire safety issues were identified and addressed.

The tracker demonstrates the range and variation of operational engagement, from brief visits to full risk checks and follow-ups:

Operational crews have engaged a wide range of premises including retirement and care homes, hospitals, schools, supermarkets, offices, warehouses, restaurants, nurseries, takeaways and high-rise accommodation.

Engagement approaches have been equally varied, encompassing fire safety visits, SSRAs, post-incident checks, community visits and pre-planned events such as fireworks inspections.

Typical outcomes from these interactions include the provision of business engagement leaflets in almost all cases, the completion of basic fire safety checks in the majority of visits and the identification and resolution of minor fire safety issues by crews. Where more serious risks are identified, significant issues are recorded on fire safety complaint forms and passed to the protection team to assess.

This approach ensures all operational crew activity is captured, monitored and contributes to the service's wider business engagement programme.

The Primary Authority Scheme (PAS) provides a formal framework through which businesses can receive consistent, reliable and tailored regulatory advice from a single fire and rescue service. This reduces duplication, improves compliance and supports businesses in understanding their legal fire safety responsibilities.

BFRS currently maintains partnerships with a diverse range of organisations and their subsidiaries including major retailers, hospitality groups, housing providers and service station operators.

As of October 2025, key PAS partners include: Advance Housing and Support Ltd, Cineworld Group Plc, Housing Solutions Ltd, KFC franchise operators, Red Kite Community Housing, The Big Table Group Limited, The Restaurant Group Limited, Liberty Bar and Restaurant Group Limited, Fairhive Homes Limited, Welcome Break Holdings Ltd, William Hill Organisation Limited, Thrive Homes Ltd, and John Lewis Plc. Collectively, over 400 hours per year are dedicated to supporting these partners through the scheme.

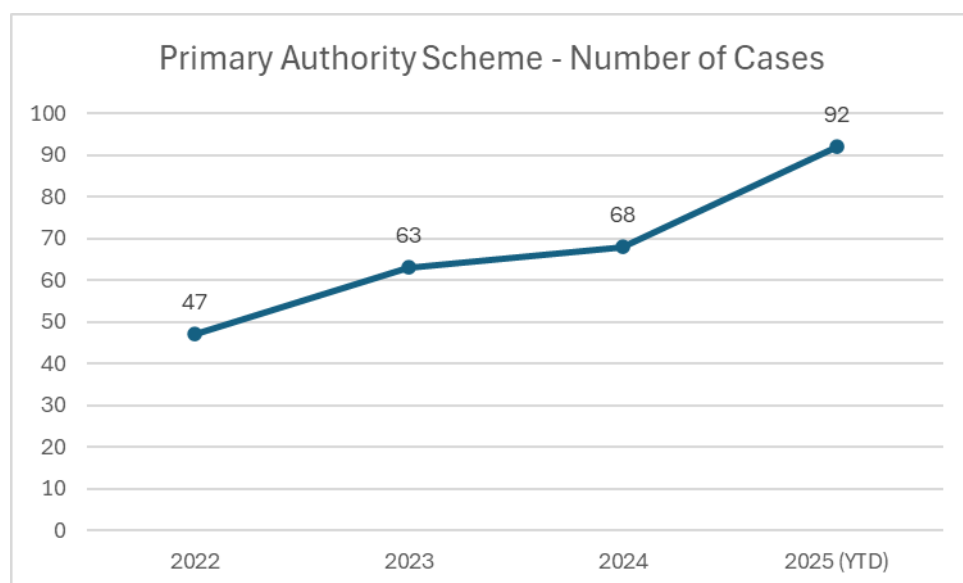


Figure 7: number of Primary Authority Scheme (PAS) cases by calendar year

PAS directly supports BFRS's Business Engagement Programme by:

- Providing businesses with tailored advice and proactive support to reduce the likelihood of enforcement action.
- Ensuring clear, consistent and transparent guidance across multi-site operators.
- Strengthening collaboration with key partners to improve overall fire safety compliance.

Through PAS, BFRS enhances its ability to target engagement, improve risk awareness and deliver measurable outcomes in line with national expectations for Protection effectiveness.

Additionally, the team manages Requests for Fire Safety Support with all activities recorded in PRMS. In 2025 the team successfully completed and logged 127 requests, accounting for a total of 190 hours of dedicated activity.

8. Additional Regulatory Workload Analysis

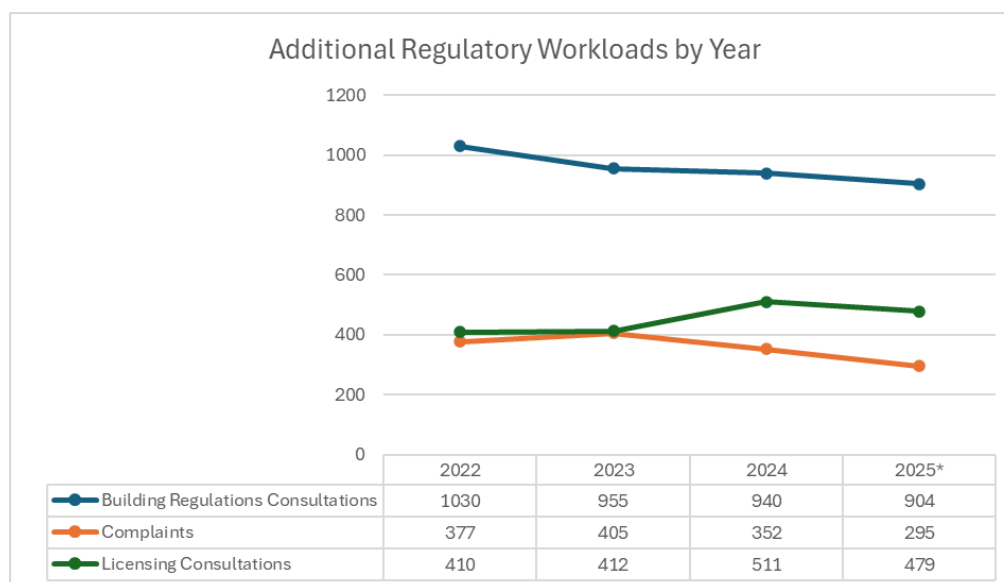
Demand across Protection activities continues to be closely monitored to ensure the Service maintains a clear understanding of the workload placed on qualified Inspecting Officers. This insight supports effective resource planning and ensures statutory duties are delivered consistently, efficiently and within required timeframes.

Protection demand encompasses a wide range of activities, including licensing and building regulation consultations, management of fire safety complaints and post-incident follow-up inspections.

Key activity areas include:

- **Licensing and Building Regulation Consultations** – Consultation activity has shown sustained demand, reflecting both ongoing local development and the expanding interface with the Building Safety Regulator. While the number of Building Regulation consultations appears to have reduced (from 1,030 in 2022 to 904 recorded so far in 2025), the 2025 figure represents calendar year data up to 10 November and is therefore expected to rise. The complexity and depth of Building Regulation consultations has increased, particularly for higher-risk residential buildings within scope of the Building Safety Act and for mixed-use developments where more detailed technical scrutiny is required.
- **Fire Safety Complaints Management** – Complaints continue to be managed through a structured triage system to ensure timely, proportionate intervention and effective risk management. Complaint volumes have reduced from 377 in 2022 to 295 in 2025 to date. As all complaints are received and added to PRMS, with urgency assessed and actioned on a same-day to one-month basis depending on risk, the year-end total is expected to remain close to the current figure, with only limited variation as late-year cases are completed and recorded.

This downward trend is partly attributed to earlier intervention by operational crews, improved public awareness and stronger engagement with responsible persons. However, complaint complexity remains variable, with some requiring formal enforcement or multi-agency coordination.



*1 January 2025 – 10 November 2025

Figure 8: volume of demand led activity managed by year

Although headline figures for 2025 are currently lower due to being year-to-date, overall demand is expected to align closely with previous years once full-year data are available. Despite overall consultation volumes remaining broadly consistent, the technical complexity of cases continues to increase due to new statutory requirements, the expanded information obligations introduced by recent fire safety legislation, and the additional scrutiny associated with higher-risk residential buildings.

Continuous monitoring through quarterly performance reporting ensures that workload pressures are clearly understood and that the Protection function remains equipped and resilient to meet its statutory responsibilities.

9. Workforce Development and Competency

The Service continues its commitment to workforce development, ensuring that staff are supported, skilled and confident in delivering effective regulatory services.

The team structure now provides a clear hierarchy of accountability and professional support, creating defined reporting lines and enabling better oversight of workload, mentoring and progression. Alignment with the [National Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators \(NCF\)](#) is embedded, with progress tracked through structured competency

matrices, individual development plans and regular reviews to maintain professional standards.

The most significant workforce risk facing the Protection function is the challenge of attracting, recruiting and retaining qualified fire safety professionals. Nationally, there is a recognised shortage of competent fire safety inspectors, driven by high demand across the public and private sectors, increasing legislative complexity and competition for experienced personnel. Achieving full competency within Protection is both time-intensive and resource-dependent, requiring structured training, mentoring and assessment over several years. This presents an ongoing risk to the Service's ability to maintain capacity and resilience at a time of rising regulatory demand.

Protection training has been broadened this year to include upskilling of our operational staff, helping to build a shared understanding of fire safety principles across stations and improve the quality of fire safety engagement during visits. The rollout of XVR simulation training to crews has further enhanced their protection awareness and business engagement capabilities.



Figure 9: Screenshot of the Fire Safety XVR simulation training package

Grant funding received through the Protection Uplift has enabled significant investment in staffing, training and digital systems, directly contributing to enhanced capacity, consistency and resilience. However, the eventual withdrawal of this grant represents a financial challenge. Forward planning is already underway to consider how we can integrate critical posts and priorities into core budgets, ensuring service continuity and sustained improvement.

The Protection establishment consists of 26 posts, comprising 21 permanent roles and 5 uplift-funded roles. Nineteen permanent posts are currently filled. There are 5 vacancies in total: 2 permanent and 3 fixed-term or temporary posts, including 2 uplift-grant positions. Staff at all levels are progressing through competency pathways and are in development roles. This combination of filled posts, vacancies and developing staff provides capacity for future growth but also highlights the need for continued recruitment and progression

activity, particularly as uplift-funded posts will require long-term solutions within core budgets to maintain resilience and service continuity.

The Current Protection team structure, including temporary posts funding through grant funding, can be seen in Appendix C.

During 2025, members of the Protection team are engaged in a range of accredited development programmes, including business administration apprenticeships, Level 3 and Level 4 fire safety certificates and diplomas, Level 5 fire engineering design and Level 6–7 fire safety engineering qualifications. This structured and progressive approach to professional development reflects the Service's ongoing investment in building a competent, motivated and future-ready workforce, despite the wider sector recruitment and retention challenges.

In the last three years the service has invested in additional specialist qualifications to strengthen staff competency in managing complex and high-risk premises. For example, several staff have achieved healthcare-specific guidance training, including NHS England's Health Technical Memorandum (HTM). This guidance provides a best-practice framework for assessing and managing fire risks in complex healthcare environments taking into account the unique challenges of these settings ensuring patient, staff and visitor safety.

A recent success story highlights the impact of this investment. The team undertook a comprehensive programme at a major hospital which included multiple site visits, detailed fire risk assessments and realistic evacuation exercises involving the movement of patients under challenging conditions. Enforcement actions resulting from the project prompted the hospital to implement significant upgrades including a new fire alarm system, reconfigured fire doors and over 1,200 additional detectors. These inspections required careful planning, coordination and sustained effort, often involving several hours on-site and multiple officers.

This work demonstrates the service's ability to provide robust fire safety oversight in complex healthcare settings, ensuring improvements in compliance and supporting hospital staff to maintain safer environments for patients and personnel. It also illustrates how investment in specialist qualifications enhances the team's capability to manage high-risk premises effectively.

10. Partnership and Regional Working

The Service maintains strong regional and national alignment through active participation in the NFCC South East Region meetings and our monthly engagement with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR). Our involvement in the NFCC Strategic Protection Forum further reinforces consistency with emerging national standards and best practice.

Strategic and tactical partnership arrangements with Milton Keynes City Council and Buckinghamshire Council are now firmly established, with a shared focus on building safety and remediation. The Service continues to play a leading role in coordinating the Accelerated Remediation Plan for medium-rise buildings, ensuring clear accountability, effective oversight and improved safety outcomes for residents.

Safety Advisory Groups (SAGs) operate across both Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes to support the safe planning and delivery of public events. SAGs provide a coordinated forum bringing together Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service, NHS partners, local authorities and BFRS. Event organisers retain legal responsibility for safety but SAGs offer a single, integrated point of advice, scrutiny and assurance for event plans, risk assessments and operational arrangements. Meetings are held virtually, in-person and on site, with notifications ranging from small community activities to major events requiring detailed multi-agency planning. Higher-profile events also trigger the development of an Operational Response Plan (ORP), produced by the relevant Service Delivery Area lead and disseminated through the Response Policy framework, designed to share information across the Service with operational crews and Flexi-Duty Officers to improve the briefing of mass gatherings and community events which may affect our response to the site and surrounding area, strengthening preparedness should an incident occur.

The Service's partnership arrangements are extensive, extending beyond those already noted and include Trading Standards South East (TSSE), Milton Keynes, and Buckinghamshire and Surrey, as well as close working relationships with Licensing, Building Control, Housing and Environmental Health teams.

11. Forward Look

Building on the progress we intend to continue to deliver through the 2025–26 Annual Delivery Plan, the Service will look to further strengthen the Protection function and ensure sustained delivery of statutory duties.

The forward focus for 2026–27 will centre on workforce development, system innovation, partnership working and embedding learning from audits, incidents, and peer reviews.

Key priorities include:

- Invest in professional development to ensure Protection staff are competent, confident and equipped to respond to evolving risks.
- Develop and implement a competence and capacity programme for the Protection team, including an associate model to support the delivery of complex protection work.
- Improve administrative efficiency by reducing the time qualified inspection officers spend on non-specialist tasks, supported by process reviews.
- Deliver the Business Engagement Communications Plan for 2026–27 to strengthen relationships with local businesses and organisations and promote compliance.
- Progress the Remediation Acceleration Plan in partnership with local authorities to address high-risk residential premises.
- Deliver system and process improvements to the Premises Risk Management System (PRMS), prioritising usability, efficiency and functionality for end-users

12. Conclusion

Since the 2023 HMICFRS inspection, the Protection function has transformed, underpinned by strong leadership, robust governance and a culture of continuous improvement.

RBIP now prioritise the highest-risk premises, supported by enhanced data, KPIs, and QA while staff progress through structured development pathways to deliver competent, confident and consistent inspections.

Engagement with businesses, multi-occupancy residential buildings and regional partners has been strengthened, ensuring a proportionate, evidence-led approach to compliance and enforcement.

Peer review and benchmarking have reinforced best practice and Annual Delivery Plan actions are aligned with HMICFRS effectiveness standards to maintain focus and momentum.

Whilst the Service is now far more assured, it is reasonable to assume that Protection demands will continue to increase over coming years. Looking ahead we recognise the biggest risk to delivering an outstanding Protection function is the vulnerability of maintaining the right numbers of qualified staff to consistently meet demand. Building a more resilient capability is therefore a high priority. Alongside this, the Service will continue to invest in workforce development, system improvements and risk-based targeting to sustain high-quality protection activity to ensure the team is professional, resilient and fully equipped to protect the public, meet statutory duties and continue its trajectory of improvement and excellence.

Appendix A – Assurance Against 2025–2026 Protection Delivery Priorities

Colour	Descriptor	Meaning / Status
B	Substantial Assurance	Actions are complete or fully embedded. Strong evidence demonstrates that objectives are being met, with high confidence in delivery.
G	Reasonable Assurance	Actions are in progress and broadly on track. Confidence remains high that objectives will be delivered.
A	Developing Assurance	Actions are partially implemented. Progress is being made, but active management is required to ensure delivery.
R	No Assurance	Actions are not progressing or are off track. There is little or no evidence that objectives will be met without urgent intervention.

Priority Area	Purpose and Intended Outcome	Progress and Evidence (as of Nov 2025)	Alignment to HMICFRS Effectiveness Assessment	Assurance Level (BRAG)
1. Embed and evaluate the Business Engagement Programme	To build sustainable relationships with businesses, improve understanding of fire safety responsibilities and reduce risk through education and proactive engagement.	<p>The Business Engagement Framework is now fully embedded.</p> <p>Local delivery is targeted via SDA Station Plans, with clear success measures in place.</p>	Demonstrates how the Service promotes fire safety and reduces risk through prevention and business support. Aligns with HMICFRS expectations for proactive, intelligence-led engagement.	Reasonable Assurance

		<p>Communication channels include workshops, social media and digital resources.</p> <p>Evaluation of impact and reach is underway.</p>		
2. Strengthen partnership arrangements within multi-occupied residential buildings	<p>To ensure coordinated management of fire safety risks and remediation within high and medium-rise premises through effective partnership and enforcement.</p>	<p>Strong partnerships established with housing providers and councils.</p> <p>Remediation register completed</p> <p>Partnership agreement in final drafting stage.</p> <p>A triage and prioritisation process is now in use to manage workload and enforcement activity.</p>	<p>Evidences collaboration and joint working to reduce fire risk in buildings. Aligns with HMICFRS focus on partnership effectiveness and protection outcomes.</p>	Reasonable Assurance
3. Develop Protection team resilience through succession planning	<p>To strengthen workforce sustainability by developing clear progression routes, improving retention and maintaining core competency across all levels.</p>	<p>Competency and training needs analysis complete</p> <p>New role profiles in place with out-of-hours support introduced</p>	<p>Demonstrates effective workforce planning and development to maintain delivery capacity. Supports HMICFRS expectations around resourcing and skills resilience.</p>	Developing Assurance

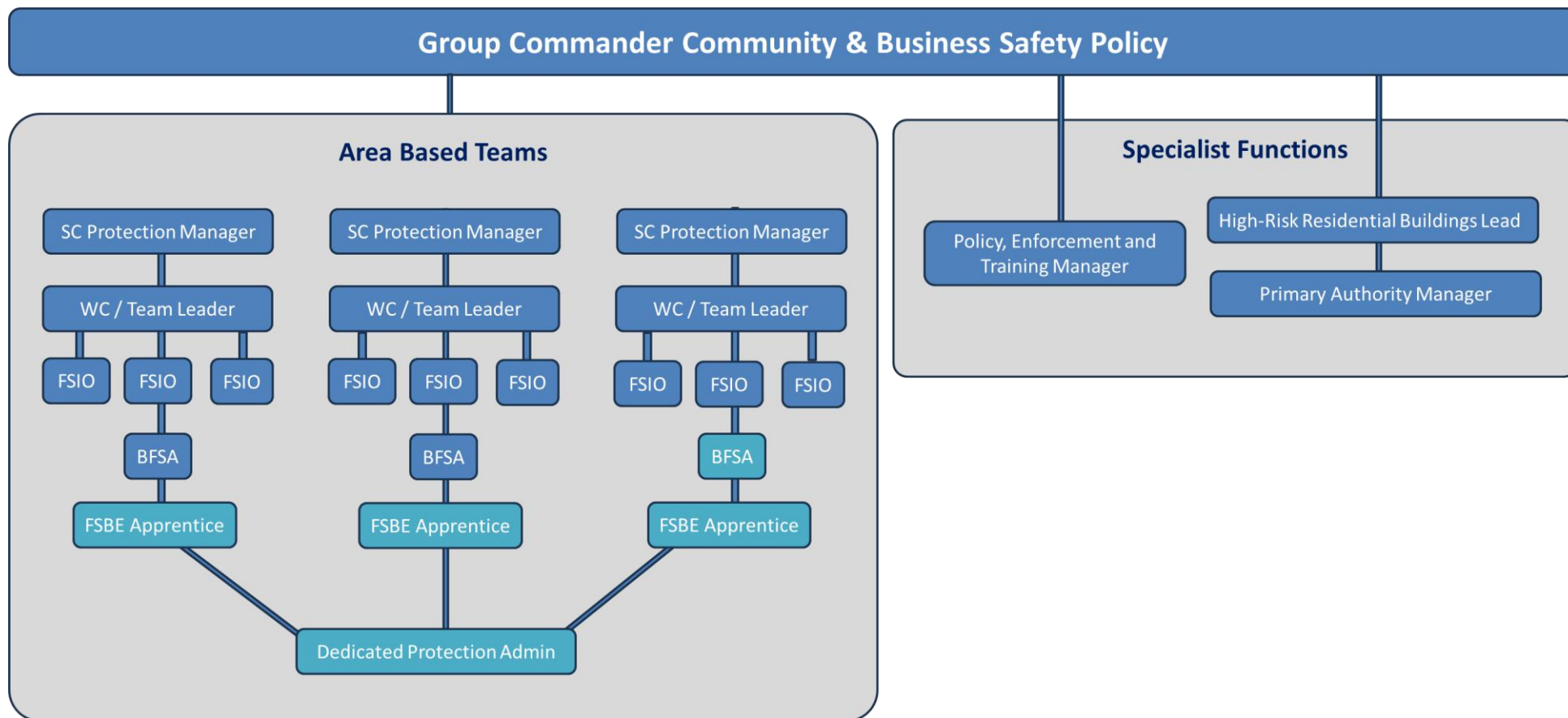
		Benchmarking across neighbouring services underway. Development pathways embedded in workforce planning.		
4. Trial the use of operational station-based staff to resolve fire safety complaints	To increase capacity, integrate operational insight into Protection work and enhance local responsiveness for low-risk complaints.	<p>Trial successfully progressing.</p> <p>Revised process and documentation complete.</p> <p>Fireworks and during-performance inspections reinstated.</p> <p>XVR fire safety training session being delivered Q3 25/26.</p>	Supports HMICFRS focus on innovation, resource efficiency and using operational intelligence to inform fire safety activity.	Reasonable Assurance
5. Review of the PRMS system and processes	To improve data quality, streamline workflow and enhance visibility of Protection performance and outcomes.	<p>Comprehensive review completed</p> <p>New KPIs introduced to capture a wider range of activity.</p> <p>Ongoing discussions with system developers to implement changes and enhancements.</p>	Demonstrates robust governance, use of data and evidence-led performance management, aligning with HMICFRS criteria for efficiency and effectiveness.	Developing Assurance

Appendix B – Assurance Against Protection Peer Review Recommendations

Theme / Recommendation Area	Purpose and Intended Outcome	Progress and Evidence (as of Nov 2025)	Alignment to HMICFRS Effectiveness Assessment	Assurance Level (BRAG)
1. Understanding and Use of the Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP)	To ensure a consistent, transparent and risk-informed approach to prioritising audits and reactive tasks, maintaining progress against core RBIP objectives.	<p>Work prioritisation between RBIP and reactive activity has been clearly defined and implemented.</p> <p>The use of the Relative Risk Rating (RRR) model is being embedded and documented to support consistency in revisit frequency.</p>	Strengthens assurance that risk is appropriately assessed and managed through an intelligence-led approach. Aligns with HMICFRS expectations for prioritising risk and delivering proportionate Protection activity.	Reasonable Assurance
2. Data and Methodology	To ensure data used in the RBIP is accurate, current and effectively informs decision-making and performance monitoring.	<p>Data refreshes are now scheduled quarterly.</p> <p>Protection managers work closely with the Data Team to understand and validate datasets.</p> <p>PRMS processes under review to enhance confidence, automate scoring and reduce administrative burden.</p>	Demonstrates use of accurate data and systems to support risk prioritisation, audit planning and evidence-based decision-making.	Reasonable Assurance
3. Policy, Procedure, and Guidance	To establish clear governance and ownership of all Protection policies and	Ownership for drafting and updating Protection policies has been assigned.	Provides clear evidence of strong governance and oversight, supporting	Reasonable Assurance

	procedures, ensuring consistency and accountability.	Governance routes are now defined, providing assurance that policies remain current and reflect best practice.	consistent and effective delivery of statutory duties.	
4. Quality Assurance (QA)	To strengthen oversight and assurance of Protection activities through peer feedback and structured recording of enforcement assurance.	<p>Enforcement assurance recording processes have been implemented and are now embedded.</p> <p>A revised QA process incorporating peer-to-peer review is being trialled to reduce dependency on line managers and promote shared learning.</p>	Aligns with HMICFRS expectations for continuous improvement, quality management and assurance of Protection activity.	Reasonable Assurance

Appendix C – Protection team structure (Positions in light blue are funded through grant funding)



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Prevention Case Studies

The Protection team play a critical role in safeguarding the public, supporting businesses, and ensuring compliance with statutory fire safety requirements. Operating as a Responsible Authority under the Licensing Act 2003 and as an enforcing authority under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the team provides assurance across a wide range of built environments. Their work not only addresses immediate risks but also drives long-term improvement in fire safety standards across the community.

The following case studies highlight the scope and significance of the Protection team's activity.

Case Study 1: Restaurant Licence Application

As a Responsible Authority, the Protection Department assesses licensing applications to ensure that premises seeking permission to operate meet fundamental fire safety standards.

A recent application from a local restaurant demonstrated the importance of early engagement in the licensing process. During the review, Inspecting Officers identified concerns that prompted a full audit under the Fire Safety Order. On visiting the premises, officers uncovered multiple serious deficiencies, including:

- Absence of a suitable fire risk assessment
- Blocked and unusable fire exits
- Untested fire alarm and detection systems
- Poorly maintained and obstructed emergency lighting
- Inaccessible firefighting equipment
- Lack of staff fire safety training and evacuation procedures
- Ceiling coverings that supported surface flame spread

Our intervention ensured that the business addressed these issues promptly, protecting public safety and preventing the likelihood of future enforcement action or fire-related incidents. Without this proactive approach during the licensing stage, an unsafe premises could have operated with significant risk to staff, customers, and the surrounding community.

Case Study 2: Residential Apartment Block Audit

As part of the Service's Risk-Based Inspection Programme, the Protection Department undertook a pre-arranged audit at purpose-built residential apartment blocks. Despite the managing agent withdrawing cooperation shortly before the visit, the Inspecting Officer proceeded due to the potential risks.

During the audit, officers identified a disabled fire alarm system across multiple floors. This system was essential, as the buildings were undergoing a simultaneous evacuation strategy due to replacement of a previously non-compliant external wall system.

What began as a two-hour audit escalated into a full day on site to ensure that urgent repairs were carried out. Without immediate action, a prohibition notice would likely have been required, affecting numerous residents.

Late that evening, after confirmation that the alarm system had been repaired, tested, and restored to full functionality, an action plan with clear compliance deadlines was issued to the responsible person. Thematic audits have since been scheduled for other residential blocks managed by the same agent to address broader systemic risks.

Case Study 3: Major NHS Hospital Fire Safety Improvements and ICU Evacuation Drill

Fire safety at a major NHS hospital has been a long-standing challenge, culminating in significant enforcement activity by the Protection team. The enforcement process highlighted critical life safety deficiencies and facilitated the securing of substantial investment for improvements.

Key achievements and outcomes included:

- Installation of a new BS 5839-Pt1 L1 fire alarm system
- Resolution of complex fire door wiring and cause-and-effect arrangements
- Deployment of 1,200 new fire detectors
- More than 120 fire risk assessments led by the newly appointed Fire Safety Advisor
- Over 70 hours of Protection Officer time across 14 visits, each involving two to five officers

While considerable progress has been made, fire safety at the site remains a significant and complex challenge. Sustained commitment from the Trust and ongoing oversight from the Protection team will be essential to maintain an acceptable level of safety and avoid future enforcement action.

Case Study 4: Retrospective Planning Change – HMO Conversion, Milton Keynes

The Protection Department responded to a complaint from Milton Keynes Building Control regarding a property that had been retrospectively converted from a single-storey private dwelling into a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). The conversion included the addition of a floor, increasing the number of sleeping rooms from 10 to 17.

A joint visit was conducted with Planning, Building Control, the Fire and Rescue Service, and Private Sector Housing. During the inspection, Building Control determined that the building was unsafe, with multiple deficiencies including means of escape, compartmentation, and door compliance issues.

The Protection Department issued an Enforcement Notice requiring the Responsible Person to complete remedial works.

This case exemplifies the multi-agency work frequently undertaken with our Local Authority partners to ensure fire safety risks are appropriately mitigated.

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 10 December 2025

Report title: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023-2025 Update

Lead Member: Councillor Llew Monger, Chairman

Report sponsor: Chief Fire Officer, Louise Harrison

Author and contact: Anne-Marie Carter, Head of Service Improvement –
acarter@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Noting

Recommendations:

That the HMICFRS update be noted

Executive summary:

HMICFRS published the BFRS Round 3/2023-2025 report on 19 October 2023. The report can be found here: [BFRS 2023-2025 - HMICFRS](#). This report sets out HMICFRS inspection findings for Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service following the inspection during May and June 2023. The latest report for the Service identifies three causes of concern, accompanied by 10 recommendations, and 26 areas for improvement.

As per requirements set out in the report covering letter to the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer on 17 October 2023, a copy of the action plan was sent to HMICFRS within 28 days of the report publication; on the 15 November 2023.

On 21 November 2023, HMICFRS informed the Service that it would be entering the supportive Engage process. The Engage process provided additional scrutiny and support from the Inspectorate.

Following revisit in September 2024 and January 2025 HMICFRS confirmed all recommendations related to Prevention, Protection and EDI had been successfully completed. All Causes of concern are now closed, and the Service was removed from an enhanced level of monitoring (Engage) on 07 March 2025.

Areas for Improvement

The service was issued 26 Areas for Improvement following inspection. These are subject to ongoing review and scrutiny through established internal governance mechanisms, including monthly Delivery Group meetings and oversight by the HMICFRS Improvement Board.

As of the end of October 2025, the Service has made the following progress against the HMICFRS areas of Improvement:

	Complete	On Track	Risk to Progress
Total AFI's	24	2	0

The detail can be found in Appendix 1: HMICFRS Round 3 Action Plan

HMICFRS fire and rescue services inspection programme 2025–27

HMICFRS has shared the initial Fire and Rescue Services Inspection Programme for 2025–2027, BFRS is in the 1st fourteen services being inspected:

The Key dates for the Service are:

January 2026:

- Document Request - ranging from our Community Risk Management Plan through to various procedures
- Staff Survey – available to all staff to share their views on the service anonymously

February-March 2026:

- A range of interviews, desktops reviews and focus groups will take place across the service.
- Both the Chairman of the Fire Authority and the Chairman of the Overview and Audit committee will be interviewed.

We remain committed to ongoing improvement, ensuring the service is prepared to confidently demonstrate our strengths and progress to HMICFRS

State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2024–25

On the 5 November 2025, HMICFRS released their 3rd Annual State of Fire and Rescue report. (Appendix 2) The report contains HMIC's assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services in England, which is based on the inspection reports published between February 2023 and August 2025.

The report also provides updates on the status of each of HMICFRS's seven national recommendations. Three recommendations are complete with four in progress.

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service was specifically highlighted for having successfully resolved all previous causes of concern and re-entered standard monitoring, reflecting significant cultural progress.:

“To create a positive culture, senior leaders must be visible, accessible and model their service's expected values and behaviours. Services such as London Fire Brigade and Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire and Greater Manchester fire and rescue

services have made significant cultural improvements through visible values-based leadership, strategic focus and well-executed cultural change action plans. These services have developed teams that adhere to their values and have created the right conditions for change.”

The Service will continue to review the HMICFRS Annual Assessment in detail and identify opportunities to adopt best practice highlighted across the sector.

Financial implications:

The prioritisation of improvements to address the specific recommendations raised within the causes of concern may introduce additional financial implications, either through reprioritisation of other projects, or through new workstreams.

Consideration will be given to ensure associated costs, both direct and indirect, are fully understood and managed effectively.

Risk management:

There remain reputational corporate risks to the organisation. The Service continues to take steps to mitigate this through having extensive internal and external audits of a number of areas of the Service, in addition to the HMICFRS inspections. The internal audit plan for 25/26 can be found here: [Internal Audit Plan \(Pg89-92\)](#)

Legal implications:

The current Fire and Rescue Service National Framework issued under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, to which the Authority must have regard when carrying out its functions, states as follows at paragraph 7.5:

‘Fire and rescue authorities must give due regard to reports and recommendations made by HMICFRS and – if recommendations are made – prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan detailing how the recommendations are being actioned. If the fire and rescue authority does not propose to undertake any action as a result of a recommendation, reasons for this should be given.’

It continues: ‘When forming an action plan, the fire and rescue authority could seek advice and support from other organisations, for example, the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Local Government Association’.

Privacy and security implications:

No privacy or security implications have been identified that are directly associated with this report or its appendices.

The report and its appendices are not protectively marked.

Duty to collaborate:

Each fire and rescue service is inspected individually. However, the latest report includes findings relating to the Service's ability to collaborate effectively with partners. The report states: "We were pleased to see the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate. It continues to consider opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders."

Health and safety implications:

The HMICFRS report states:

- The service provides good well-being provisions to its workforce, but work-related stress is not being fully addressed.
- The service has a positive health and safety culture.

The areas for improvement relating to working hours and secondary contracts will feed into the health, safety and wellbeing group.

Environmental implications:

The HMICFRS report states:

"The service didn't identify all the potential climate impacts and mitigation measures required in its 2020–2025 public safety plan. This is what it calls its integrated risk management plan. It has now recognised that it needs a different range of equipment to be ready to respond to this risk both now and in the future."

This has now been addressed in the Service's new [Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2030](#)

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

The Service has been judged as 'requires improvement' in the area relating to ensuring fairness and promoting diversity, along with a cause of concern and four recommendations relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.

HMICFRS confirmed all recommendations related to EDI had been successfully completed, and the cause of concern was closed.

Consultation and communication:

Specific areas identified for Service improvement are being captured in relevant plans and will be reported on in line with the recommendations.

Background papers:

In July 2017, HMICFRS extended its remit to include inspections of England's fire and rescue services. They assess and report on the efficiency, effectiveness and people of the 44 fire and rescue services in England.

HMICFRS BFRS Home Page: [Buckinghamshire - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/buckinghamshire-his-majestys-inspectorate-of-constabulary-and-fire-rescue-services/)

24 October 2023 – Extraordinary Fire Authority: His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Inspection Report 2023

[Extraordinary Fire Authority Meeting – 24 October 2023 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)

6 December 2023 – Fire Authority: His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023 Action Plan

[Fire Authority Meeting - 6 December 2023 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)

08 November 2024- HMICFRS Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: Causes of concern progress letter

[Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: Causes of concern progress letter - His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#)

07 March 2025 – HMICFRS Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: Return to default phase of monitoring

[Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: Return to default phase of monitoring - His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#)

The last update was presented to members on 05 November 2025 Overview and Audit Committee: [OVERVIEW AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - 5 NOVEMBER 2025 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)

05 November 2025 - State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2024–25

[State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2024–25 - His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	HMICFRS Round 3 Action Plan October 2025	N/A
2	State of Fire report 2025	N/A

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Area	AFI	Responsible Officer	Deadline (End of)	Success and Impact measures	Commentary - October 25	Progress RAG End of Oct 25
Understanding the risk of fire & other emergencies	The service should make sure it is informed by a comprehensive understanding of current and future risk. It should use a wide range of data to build the risk profile and use operational data to test that the risk profile is up to date.	Director of Finance & Assets	Feb-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRMP 2025-2030 meets fire standard • External Review feedback positive • Increased understanding of the risk in our community 	<p>The service has utilised the NFCC Fire Standard to support the creation of our Community Risk Management plan 2025-2030. A detailed risk analysis was completed to support the build of the CRMP.</p> <p>An external review of how we built our CRMP has been completed by Mazars and their feedback has been included in the document.</p> <p>Throughout the build we have engaged with the community in various ways inc Focus Groups, online questionnaires, at local business leaders events.</p>	Complete
	The service, through regular engagement with its local community, needs to build a more comprehensive profile of risk in its service area.	Director of Finance & Assets	Mar-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRMP 2025-2030 meets fire standard • Evidence of regular engagement with the community throughout the life of the CRMP • Service Delivery Area profiles are in place and reviewed with the community. 	<p>Throughout the build of our CRMP 2025-2030 we have engaged with the community in various ways inc Focus Groups, online questionnaires, and engagement at local business leaders events.</p> <p>We have committed, as part of our annual review to do wider engagement each year, and there will be a dedicated page covering engagement in the final version of the CRMP.</p> <p>This will be supported by ongoing engagement with the communities we serve.</p>	Complete
	The service should make sure that the aims and objectives of prevention, protection and response activity are clearly outlined in its integrated risk management plan.	Head of Prevention & Protection Head of Response & Resilience	Mar-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention, Protection and Response strategies embedded in CRMP • Strategies show key aims, risk and actions • Annual planning process in place linked to CRMP 	<p>Our 3 Objectives and 3 enablers are now part of our new CRMP.</p> <p>These are supported by strategies included in the document. The strategies include Key aims, risks and actions.</p> <p>These key actions now feed the annual planning process. Each year a more detailed Annual Delivery plan will be built to support the delivery of the CRMP.</p>	Complete
Preventing fire and other risks	The service should evaluate its prevention work, so it understands the benefits better.	Head of Prevention & Protection	Dec-24 Jun-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPI to track Preparedness and Improvement audits completed • Behavioural change surveys conducted annually. • NFCC Quality Assurance and evaluation framework is adopted • KPI to track QA and evaluations completed 	<p>HFSV Quality Assurance bookings for CSC's and CSA's for July, document updated and submitted for approval to SDG 11th July. Background supporting documents and forms have been built.</p> <p>HFSV customer evaluations will begin W/C July 7th now that the capacity of that role will be available again due to Safeguarding team being established.</p>	Complete
Protecting the public through fire regulation	The service should review its response to false alarms to ensure protection and operational resources are used effectively.	Group Commander Service Delivery South	Feb-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot took place • KPI to track mobilisation to false alarms • Public Consultation completed • Review of pilot inc public feedback completed • Decision presented to Fire Authority. • Amended AFA policy launched (TBC) 	Project closedown being finalised. AFA project being moved to BAU with an update to be undertaken by Protection on AFA Guidance and then being managed within Protection within this guidance.	Complete
	The service should ensure its staff have the confidence to use the full range of enforcement powers.	Head of Prevention & Protection	Dec-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and guidance in place to support enforcement activity and decision making • KPI's in place to track enforcement activity • Legal support in place • Staff feedback process in place to provide assurance on confidence (1-1s and pulse survey completed?) 	Success measures 1, 2 and 3 in place and recent enforcement training delivered by legal support provider. Additional assurance through delivery of QA process. Suggest with completion of pulse survey based around the recent training, this AFI can be closed. Survey presently out for completion and awaiting returns.	Complete
	The service should make sure it plans its work with local businesses and large organisations to share information and expectations on how they can comply with fire safety regulations.	Head of Prevention & Protection	Mar-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Engagement Framework built • Business Engagement plan in place and deliverables tracked through KPI's 	A significant amount of work has been undertaken between Marcoms and Protection to develop business engagement. this has resulted to date in: Content Marketing for Business Engagement, Business Engagement Framework, Business Engagement Calendar, The Development of hotstrike material and standard letters, a business engagement tracker as well as the development of statistical data that will shortly inform the KPIs for the next financial year.	Complete

The service should assure itself that it understands what resources it reasonably requires to meet its foreseeable risk; it should make sure that all its fire engines can be sufficiently resourced, if required.	Group Commander Service Delivery North & South	Mar-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistent availability of 12 frontline appliances• Appropriate provision and availability of specialist capabilities eg Arial Appliances to meet risk• Ability to make provision for additional resilience to support large / protracted incidents or spate conditions• KPI in place for broader range of resources On-Call/resilience project to start, current focus is on On-Call contracts.	Consistent availability of 12 frontline appliances, with higher on call availability. Provision and availability maintained for WT specialist vehicles to meet risks as per CRMP, with additional planning for positive crewing of the HWY TL. Review of specialist vehicle fleet and locations/crewing, with additional reporting and KPIs to monitor this moving forward. Current crewing arrangements allow for scalable crewing to meet resilience needs through tiered response - with work ongoing to review response arrangements in year 1 of CRMP., supported by analytical work already completed on measuring resilience. On-call contract management focus, with continued monitoring in place to ensure this is reviewed. On-call KPIs / resourcing reporting to assist.	Complete
The service should make sure that its mobile data terminals are reliable so firefighters can easily access up-to-date risk information.	ICT Manager	Mar-25 Jun-25 Sept-25 Dec-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MDT Calls to helpdesk reviewed on a week basis• Process in place for crews to test if risk data is up to date• Risk information is available when away from the appliance	BAU: Calls related to MDT's are reviewed by the ICT Manager to ensure they are dealt with in a timely manner. MDT's are now part of the PIT testing process. Demountable MDT Project: Work to establish the link between the BFRS & TVFCS network has been started but futher configuration between the two network teams is required to resolve identified issues. Config changes to the Airbus software has been written and is pending approval from Airbus.	On Track
The service should make sure it has an effective system for sharing and applying the learning from operational incidents.	Head of Operational Training & Assurance	Mar-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operational learning and assurance framework published	The Operational Assurance Team has undergone a transformation into Operational Learning and Assurance. This refresh has included a new Delivery Plan, using the Fire Standard in Operational Learning as the template to what good looks like, and a new procedure which details and informs all staff within BFRS what the expectations are regarding this area. This team has the mechanism for operational staff to feedback reference operational learning and assurance via - feedback, monitoring, active monitoring and through levels of debriefing. The feedback is triaged with recommendations and action owners who update on a regular basis. The Head of Operational Assurance governs an improvement plan through quarterly meetings where action owners are held to account regarding bringing their action to a conclusion. All actions which stay on the improvement plan for over 6 months are discussed in greater detail to ascertain why. National Learns are also captured within this team to determine our position and if future improvement is required in service.	Complete
The service should make sure it consistently gives relevant information to the public to help keep them safe during and after all incidents.	Head of Communication & Marketing	Apr-25 Jun-25 July-25 Dec-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Media Training in place• MarComms part of and involved in LRF• Ability to communicate message to the public 24/7 utilising various channels	Media Training: COMPLETE Media training was successfully delivered in March 2025, supporting senior officer confidence in external communications. This is now part of ongoing training and sessions booked for 25/26 LRF Our Communications Officer has secured the Department Chair role of the WAI group, and BFRS continues to be represented at both the strategic and tactical LRF groups. She has also been supporting the planning for the upcoming Exercise Pegasus, advising scenarios and ensuring communications can be incorporated, helping to strengthen relationships with key partners and ensuring communications are consistently embedded in multi-agency planning and response. Updating the Public Ongoing – Regular MarComms input at the Level 4 meeting continues to strengthen collaboration and provide valuable operational insight, informing both incident-led and proactive safety communications. Recent examples include coordinated messaging on hot weather warnings and incident case studies, which help to deliver a more rounded public safety narrative. This approach is highly effective when capacity allows. Out-of-Hours Communications Provision Wokrshop complte and business case presetned to October Programme Board. Agreement in principle reached on tiers of comms response utilising MarComm's, Duty Officers and OSR	On Track

Responding to major & multi-agency incidents	The service should make sure it has an effective method to share fire survival guidance information with multiple callers and that it has a dedicated communication link in place.	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Jan-25	Effective method has been developed Method has undergone robust testing Robust training and guidance supports the roll out. Methodology is QA'd through an exercise programme Accurate and timely information sharing between the incident Commander and the bridgehead.	Digital Fire Survival Solution released 24/02/2025. Training delivered to FDO and PO cadre, Training HEAT packages are live. Suite of OINs have been revised and TVFCS - Calls about Multiple People at Risk (Fire) Procedure has been updated. Shared Evacuation Tracker element to be worked on for go live in March 2025 - this is an enhancement to the digital FSG solution and not integral to it.	Complete
Making best use of resources	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 it sets out in its next integrated risk management plan.	Head of Prevention & Protection Head of Response & Resilience	Apr-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention, Protection and Response strategies embedded in CRMP Strategies show link to risks Annual planning process in place linked to CRMP KPI's in place 	Service level KPI's in place to support our understanding of performance linked to P,P&R commitments / deliverables eg Response standard, HFSV Target, RBIP target. These measures allow the Service to remain agile to resource allocation and inform annual plan requirements. There is further work to do in reviewing and maturing the SD risk register. All elements of SD resource allocation will be subject to oversight and scrutiny at the newly established SD performance board.	Complete
	The service should have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive, that its time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible and in a more joined-up way to meet the priorities in its integrated risk management plan.	Group Commander North and Resourcing	Apr-25 Jun-25 July-25 Sept-25	KPI's Station plans Utilisation work Station KPI's CRMP	Station dashboards: produced monthly, showing 6 KPI's, These are reviewed through 121s with SCs and data discussed at monthly R&R meetings COMPLETE KPI's: Quarterly R&R meetings will be used to review KPMs in more detail to look at gaining narrative, understanding issues KPI data further scrutinised through governance meetings COMPLETE Workload capacity project: Evaluation report delivered to SDG and CRMP in September by SC Montague. Further evaluation of the process has been agreed to be paused due to effort to extract data. However it was agreed to continue to utilise the Outlook calendar system to capture and record workload activities for Wholetime and Day-Crewing Stations. A longer term solution is being explored. This should include the NFCC app and apps being developed by partner agencies.	Complete
	The service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity.	Head of Service Improvement	Apr-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Evaluation process in place Project evaluation presented to Interop, Exec and steering group 	All project benefits are stored in a central document, The relevant Project mangers reviews these on a regular basis. The Project evaluation process has been reviewed and updated. This process will be used going forward. An annual procurement savings reports continues to be completed. HMICFRS recently inspected Royal Berkshire stating the following: ".....comprehensively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations."	Complete
Making the fire & rescue service affordable now and in the future	The service needs to assure itself that it is maximising opportunities to improve future capacity through use of innovation, including the use of appropriate and up-to-date technology.	ICT Manager	Apr-25 Jun-25 July-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICT Trainer in place Gap Analysis complete End user survey completed 	ICT Trainer: The ICT Trainer is now in post and has received positive feedback for all sessions delivered to date. The primary objective is to enhance staff skills, particularly among operational crews, in the use of Microsoft products. The trainer's responsibilities also include delivering ad hoc training sessions as needed while on station. Smartphones on appliances project: All WT, DC, and special appliances now have mobile phones. SC Operational Preparedness & BA is assessing feedback and is considering rollout plan for OC stations.	Complete
	The service should assure itself that its IT systems are resilient, reliable, accurate and accessible.	ICT Manager	Apr-25 Jun-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PEN Test complete All systems have dedicated owners System related business continuity exercise taken place and learning captured. Service desk themes identified and fed to ICT trainer to support if needed. End user survey completed 	There are 5 strands: PEN TEST: Pen test is complete. Remediation planning of the findings is underway. Complete. System Owners: We have confirmed the dedicated 'System Owners' using the procurement Contract Managers database Complete Exercise: Meeting to be planned with IT manager and BC manager to scope the exercise and whatever the desired metrics might be. Service Desk Themes: Service Desk themes identified and ready to task the ICT Trainer once appointed Complete End User Survey: End's 6th of July. At time of writing 93 responses have been received.	Complete
	The service should make sure it has the right skills and capacity in place to successfully manage change across the organisation	Head of Service Improvement	Apr-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional Project Management Resource in place Project Manger training in place Increase knowledge of Project Management across managers 	Additional Project Manager in place, supporting projects across the service. Project manger training refreshed and to be rolled out New Governance process in place to provide additional scrutiny of Projects at tactical level(Delivery Groups) and at a strategic level (Programme Board)	Complete

Promoting the right values and culture	The service should assure itself that senior managers are visible and demonstrate service values through their behaviours.	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	Dec-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Station and Team visits taking place by Senior Managers Continue to review feedback on SMT as part of annual staff survey 	Chief Fire Officer regularly attends stations. Wider SMT also spend time on stations. All stations visits are captured and circulated to all of SMT for discussion and review. In the 2024 staff survey "I have trust and confidence in the Service's senior leadership team" was 32.79 % favourable an increase of 12.79%	Complete
	The service should proactively monitor working hours (including overtime) to improve staff well-being.	Head of People Services	Dec-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue reduction in the use of bank Overtime to be used on an ad hoc basis, when required not considered the norm or business as usual. All staff hours monitored to ensure well-being and in line with Working Time Regulations if applicable 	<p>The percentage reduction in bank shifts from Q1-Q3 of the 2023-24 financial year to the same period in 2024-25, is 19.10% reduction.</p> <p>On track to have 20% reduction this financial year which is an achievement given the staffing levels have been consistently above 300 for the majority of this period. CC uplift, skills investment, leave guidance changes have all contributed to a sustained reduction.</p> <p>Meeting being arranged with RMT ref reporting capability from FSR on working hours.</p> <p>New Template for support staff record of hours being explored.</p> <p>Pay & Allowances review will provide information on allowances being paid relating to working hours/flexibility - to be reviewed to ensure consistency and welfare of employees</p> <p>Further enhanced through key items on 25-26 Annual Delivery plan covering people management.</p>	Complete
	The service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure staff don't work excessive hours.	Head of People Services	Oct-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All secondary employment forms are in place and reviewed as per procedure. Employees do not work excessive hours. Escalation of concerns to line manager 	Introduced a Microsoft form greatly improving efficiency, and monitoring of secondary employment. These will be reviewed by HR and ensured that the correct approval has been obtained and recorded on iTrent. These will then be monitored moving forward and six monthly reviews will be required to take place with their managers, who will then update HR on any amendments/changes.	Complete
Getting the right people with the right skills	The service should review its succession planning to make sure that it has effective arrangements in place to manage staff turnover while continuing to provide its core service to the public.	Head of People Services	Mar-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tools and resources being utilised by managers. Improved data gathering and understanding of workforce in relation to retention/development/succession requirements Increased number of assessment development centre applications for support staff Analysis on investment in staff training 	<p>Workforce planning data now includes number of staff in development, progress and anticipated completion date.</p> <p>Retirement profile and potential impact examined at People Delivery Group.</p> <p>Appraisal pack contains section on talent management, career discussion and personal development.</p> <p>Monthly meetings being held between Service Delivery & People Directorate, to examine challenges and impacts on resourcing.</p> <p>December 2024 ADC received the highest number of applications.</p> <p>Annual analysis completed on the TNA spend, broken down by staff group and my category of training.</p>	Complete
	The service should assure itself that all staff are appropriately trained to fulfil their role.	Head of People Services	Oct-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core training requirements known and being implemented. Right people with right skills. 	Leadership and Management Development Programme launched as part of the new staff development pathway. New development and assessment pathways will clearly define training and qualification requirements at all levels across both uniformed and non uniformed staff. Competency Programmes launched for all operational roles, bespoke programmes being developed for support staff. High potential development programme launched October 2024. Minimum training requirements defined (Incident Command Foundation/IOSH/Level 1 ICS/Supervisory Manager Acquisition Programme) before promoting into CC role - this ensures core foundation learning has been undertaken for what could be required from the individual on day 1. It does extend the length of time between being successful at an ADC and placed in role, however it ensure right people with right skills.	Complete
	The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.	Head of People Services	Mar-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot High Potential Development Programme Launched Candidate(s) enrolled Evaluation of pilot programme to identify learns and evolve 	<p>High Potential Programme live.</p> <p>Successful candidates from December ADC identified for high potential programme. This is for both operational and non-operational roles.</p> <p>x5 Supervisory Manager (2 support staff and 3 operational)</p> <p>x1 Middle Manager (operational)</p> <p>Meetings with high potential candidates being held with line management to design bespoke development plans to support their acceleration.</p> <p>Positive feedback received from candidates on how programme could support and what they would like to achieve from it.</p> <p>Evaluation to take place once candidates have completed. December 2025.</p>	Complete

Managing performance & developing leaders	The service should put in place a system to actively manage staff careers, with the aim of diversifying the pool of future and current leaders.	Head of People Services	Oct-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools and resources being utilised by managers. • Improved data gathering and understanding of workforce in relation to retention/ development/ succession requirements • Increased number of assessment development centre applications for support staff • Analysis on investment in staff training * Staff Development pathway, inclusive to all staff and ORCE methodology removes any potential bias from panels. * Seek feedback from under represented staff groups on any potential barriers - * session at network meetings to raise awareness 	<p>Staff Development Pathway has been launched and incorporates a number of workstreams developing inclusive processes for all staff and supporting career and personal development. Revised leadership and management development programme now live and is inclusive of all staff, not just operational. Enhanced talent management documentation has been included within staff appraisal process to give focus on career aspirations and short, medium and long term goals to achieve them. A new behavioural and leadership framework has been developed and gives foundation for expectations, and is aligned to new values. Staff Development pathway, inclusive to all staff and ORCE methodology removes any potential bias from panels.</p>	Complete
	The service should assure itself it has an effective mechanism in place for succession planning, including senior leadership roles.	Head of People Services	Dec-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools and resources being utilised by managers to have career discussions with their teams/staff • Improved data gathering and understanding of workforce in relation to retention/ development/ succession requirements • Analysis of appraisal data - Talent Management • Analysis of appraisal data - continue in current role / ready to move within level / potential to move to next level • workforce planning data for all roles, including retirement profile to be used to inform decision making at People Delivery Group 	<p>Informed workforce planning slides presented at January People Delivery Group containing retirement forecast and updated leave rate.</p> <p>Appraisal pack contains section focusing on talent management, career discussion and personal development.</p> <p>Data to be pulled from appraisal for 25/26 - talent management, ED&I and continue in current role / ready to move within level / potential to move to next level</p>	Complete

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HMICFRS

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
and Fire & Rescue Services

State of Fire and Rescue

The Annual Assessment of
Fire and Rescue Services in England

2024–25

His Majesty's Chief Inspector
of Fire and Rescue Services

**His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and
Fire & Rescue Services**

State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2024–25

**Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services
Act 2004**



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Foreword

This is my third annual report to the Secretary of State under [section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#). It is my first annual report on fire and rescue since the new Government came into power in July 2024. The report contains my assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services in England, which is based on the inspection reports we published between February 2023 and August 2025.

I also offer my reflections on the progress the fire and rescue sector has made since we started inspecting services in 2018. I highlight the overall improvements, and I acknowledge that, in several important areas, the sector still needs to make further progress.

In April 2025, a machinery of government change moved all responsibility for fire policy from the Home Office to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This is a valuable opportunity to increase the momentum behind the reform that the sector has long been waiting for.

Fire and rescue services have a crucial role in protecting the public and making communities safe. Across the country, there are numerous examples that show the unwavering dedication and professionalism of fire and rescue service staff.

Alongside the rest of the country, I was deeply saddened by the major incident at Bicester Motion, Oxfordshire, in May 2025. Firefighters Martyn Sadler and Jennie Logan and a member of the public tragically lost their lives. It was a reminder to us all of the inherent risks faced by those who dedicate their lives to protecting others.

Contributions to my assessment

To help form my assessment, I wrote to chief fire officers, chairs of [fire and rescue authorities](#), [police, fire and crime commissioners](#), deputy mayors and other interested parties to gather their views on the state of fire and rescue in England. I received 44 responses. I extend my thanks to everyone who replied and offered their reflections.

I have used other reports, information and analysis made available to me to inform this report. I have drawn on findings from other relevant inspections, such as [our August 2024 thematic report, 'Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services'](#).

I have also considered information that we have gathered from our consultation events with the sector. This includes our annual chiefs and chairs event, where we meet with chief fire officers and chairs of fire and rescue authorities throughout England to discuss specific topics.

I would like to thank my colleagues at the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#), the Home Office, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Fire Standards Board, the Local Government Association, staff representative bodies and all other public organisations we work with.

I would also like to thank the staff of all 44 fire and rescue services. I appreciate the time and effort that goes into preparing for our inspections, and I commend those who use our findings as an opportunity to improve.

Finally, I express my gratitude to all staff at HMICFRS who carry out and support our inspections.

Changes at the inspectorate

In March 2025, Kathryn Stone OBE was appointed as HM Inspector for police forces and fire and rescue services in the Wales and Western Region. Previously, Kathryn was chair of the bar standards board and a non-executive member of the board of the Crown Prosecution Service. She has also had a long-standing career in public service and advocacy.

It is a pleasure to welcome Kathryn to the team. Her extensive experience will be a valuable asset to the inspectorate.



Sir Andy Cooke QPM DL

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services



Summary

Services are performing well in some areas, and in others they should improve

Progress in our Round 3 inspections

Between March 2023 and August 2025, we carried out our third full round of inspections of all 44 fire and rescue services in England (known as our Round 3 inspections). We include [links to the 44 service reports in Annex B](#), and [a summary of the grades for all 44 services is available on our website](#).

Several services made improvements in our Round 3 inspections. We closed 416 of 695 outstanding [areas for improvement \(AFIs\)](#) and issued fewer AFIs in this round. We also identified 67 examples of [promising](#) and [innovative practice](#) across 25 services.

Overall, 73 percent of the graded judgments we awarded in Round 3 were ‘adequate’, ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’. This means that services demonstrated at least some of the [characteristics of good performance](#) in most areas. And 43 percent of all grades met or exceeded our [benchmark](#) for good performance where we issued good or outstanding grades. Good is the level of performance we expect all services to achieve and is what the public deserve.

But progress across the sector remains inconsistent. We haven’t yet seen the sustained improvement we had hoped for across all services and all our inspection areas. Of the 44 services, 27 had fewer AFIs compared to Round 2. But some services hadn’t made enough progress against AFIs we issued in our previous rounds of inspections. Almost half of the AFIs outstanding in Round 3 remain uncompleted from previous rounds.

The number of [causes of concern](#) we issued stayed broadly the same compared to Round 2. But, in Round 3, seven causes of concern that we initially identified in Round 2 were still outstanding.

There were encouraging signs of progress in services improving their protection departments in particular. We awarded three services an outstanding grade for their protection work. And other services had made considerable progress in improving their risk-based inspection programmes to target high-risk premises and adopt a structured approach to auditing.

I was also encouraged to see continued progress in the sector's response to the [Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 recommendations](#). Many services had improved their operational preparedness, [control room](#) procedures and how they record and share [fire survival guidance](#).

However, I am particularly concerned by the competing pressures that protection staff continue to experience. This is due to increasing demand and ongoing difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled protection officers. Protection departments may be unable to correctly prioritise other areas of high risk, which could potentially compromise public safety.

Services should have effective governance structures and workforce plans

In high-performing services, strong internal governance often helps to support continuous improvement. In our Round 3 inspections, we found that some services needed to improve their internal governance arrangements. Some services had limited strategic oversight and scrutiny of their operational and corporate functions. Often, these shortcomings weren't properly identified or escalated within the service.

[Fire and rescue authorities](#) have an important role in setting strategic direction, providing oversight and scrutiny and leading improvement. And they need access to timely and accurate information to effectively hold services to account. In our inspections, we identified some services that weren't reporting shortcomings to the fire and rescue authority in a full, transparent or timely manner.

Effective workforce planning is essential to make sure services have the right people with the necessary skills in place. Services should have workforce and financial plans that reflect the risks and priorities they have identified in their [community risk management plans](#). While some services have workplace plans that are aligned with their community risk management plans, many still don't fully understand the capabilities of their workforce or the importance of improving their succession plans. In some services, this is because leadership teams don't effectively oversee staff skills.

I am pleased to report that most services are now increasing their focus on improving productivity. But some services still need to better understand how they use their [wholetime](#) firefighters and take a more proactive approach to maximise efficiency.

Despite decades of sector-wide focus on the need to improve equality, diversity and inclusion, progress remains limited. Some services are using [positive action](#) to help create more inclusive and representative workforces. For example, they are making efforts to improve the fairness and transparency of recruitment, development and promotion processes. But in some services, we found that leaders had little involvement in improving equality, diversity and inclusion.

Similarly, poor values, cultures and behaviour remain widespread. In too many services, staff told us that their senior leaders weren't consistently modelling the expected values of their service. When leaders fail to uphold standards, it erodes trust and weakens morale, which ultimately undermines improvement efforts.

I set out the findings from our Round 3 inspections in more detail in [chapter 1](#).

Services should focus on improving persistent issues to achieve better outcomes for the public

I am encouraged by the notable progress fire and rescue services have made in several areas. However, persistent issues continue to slow the pace and consistency of change across the sector.

In some services, I have seen the positive impact of effective leadership. Leaders at all levels have an important role in shaping culture, setting direction and inspiring progress. Some senior leaders lack the strategic awareness and skills needed to lead effectively. In our inspections, we found that many services were still not considering how to develop leaders of the future. They aren't giving leaders the skills and support they need to carry out their roles effectively.

Equally, a positive organisational culture is essential to foster the behaviours, values and leadership needed to create lasting change in fire and rescue services. I am pleased that some services have introduced independent reporting lines, established [professional standards units](#) and commissioned independent culture reviews. Leaders should set a clear direction, model the service's values and create the right conditions for improvement.

I am concerned that some services haven't significantly improved the recruitment, retention and availability of [on-call](#) firefighters. Some services have introduced initiatives to help widen the recruitment pool beyond the traditional five-minute radius. But, in others, on-call fire engines are often not available due to limited numbers of staff or a lack of training or skills. Services need to make sure that their recruitment processes are as effective and efficient as possible. This will give greater flexibility in working arrangements and attract more people into the roles.

Decisive action will support sector reform

In 2024 there was an election of a new Government and, in April 2025, a machinery of government change moved all fire policy from the Home Office to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. These changes in government responsibilities present a critical opportunity to implement the long overdue and much-needed reform across the fire and rescue sector. The Government must be decisive and follow through on its commitment to reform.

While some services have made progress, persistent issues continue to prevent improvement in certain areas. These challenges prompted us to issue [seven national recommendations to support reform \(which we list in Annex A\)](#). Although we issued six of these several years ago, three remain unaddressed. These recommendations now sit with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Until they are addressed in full, the sector won't be able to give the best possible service to the public. We will continue to use our independent voice to support and guide decision-making around reform.

I remain firmly of the view that extending our powers would support further improvement. We don't have the power to enforce the recommendations we make. Instead, we rely on services voluntarily acting on them, and this doesn't always happen. I have previously called for parity with policing legislation and for our powers to go further to create accountability and promote change. I ask that ministers give this serious consideration.

To help support reform and professionalise the sector, it is critical to establish a College of Fire and Rescue. Although I welcome the Government's renewed commitment to introduce this, it should act decisively. The need to establish the college is long overdue.

Services need to be committed to continuous improvement

To meet current and future challenges, fire and rescue services need to be open to opportunities for continuous improvement. We help with this through our inspections, thematic reviews, spotlight reports and events that promote collaboration and sharing of effective practice.

It is only possible for services to make improvements when they participate fully and openly with our inspection process. Services should use our inspection findings to develop robust improvement plans and make meaningful progress.

Achieving lasting change in the fire and rescue sector requires a system-wide approach. National bodies, such as the Local Government Association, [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) and Fire Standards Board, give valuable support and guidance to services. Services that actively adopt national guidance, align with national standards and embrace support typically perform better in the relevant areas we inspect.

1. Findings from our Round 3 inspections

In this chapter, I draw on the findings from our third round of fire and rescue service inspections.

Services' progress in our Round 3 inspections

In this section, I focus on the overall progress services have made. It identifies themes on the effectiveness of the operational service provided to the public, including prevention, protection and response.

Background: our grading, assessment and data

In March 2023, we started our third full round of inspections of all 44 fire and rescue services in England (known as our Round 3 inspections). In April 2025, we completed our inspection activity and published our final Round 3 reports in August 2025.

We include [links to the 44 service reports in Annex B](#), and [a summary of the grades for all 44 services is available on our website](#).

We didn't give overall grades for effectiveness, efficiency and people as we did in our first and second rounds of inspections. We assessed services against what we judge to be the [characteristics of good performance](#) in each inspection area, and we more clearly link our judgments to [causes of concern \(CoCs\)](#) and [areas for improvement \(AFIs\)](#).

We also expanded our previous four-tier system of graded judgments to five by introducing an 'adequate' grade. As a result, we can state more precisely where we consider improvement is needed and highlight good performance more effectively. These changes mean it isn't possible to make direct comparisons between grades awarded in this round of fire and rescue service inspections with those from previous years.

More information on data and analysis in this report is included in the ['About the data 2023–25' section of our website](#). Our [2023–25 Round 3 inspection methodology is also available on our website](#).

Overall summary of progress and analysis of grades

Several services made improvements in our Round 3 inspections. We closed 416 out of 695 AFIs, which represents 60 percent of the total.

We also identified 67 examples of [promising](#) and [innovative practice](#) across 25 services. I encourage services to refer to the [National Fire Chiefs Council \(NFCC\)'s Positive Practice Portal](#), where these examples are stored.

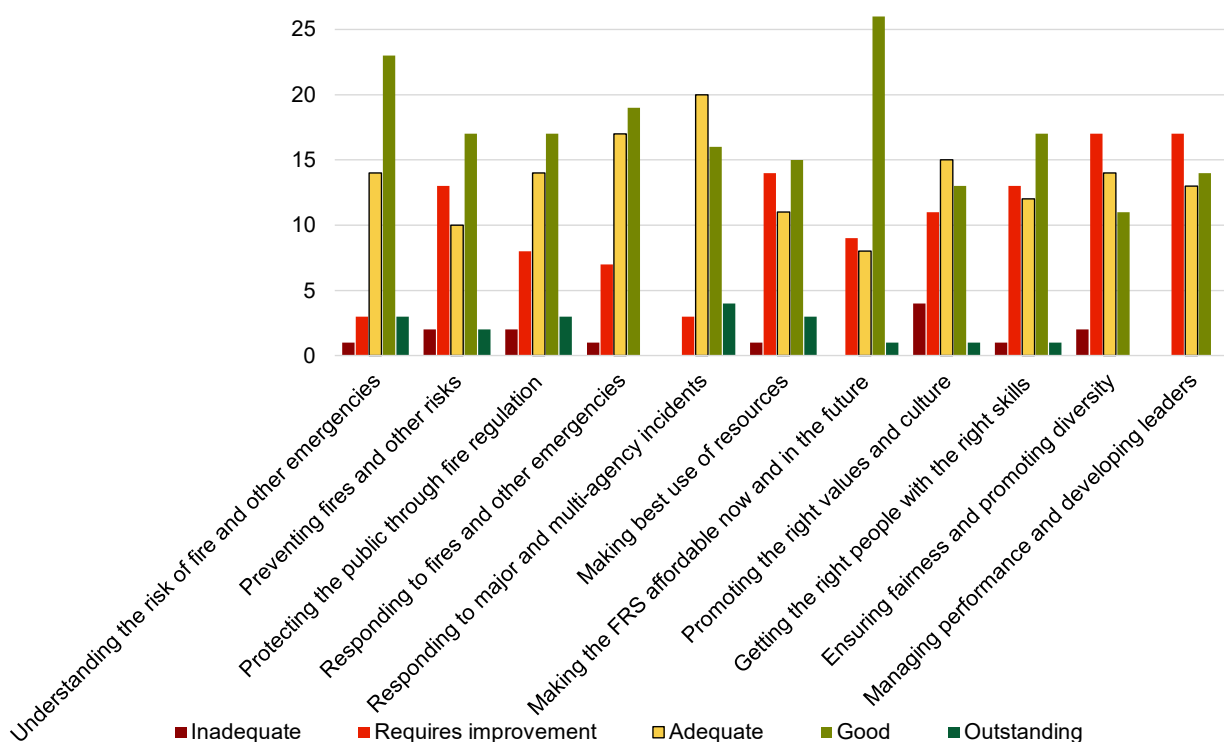
Overall, 73 percent of the graded judgments we awarded in Round 3 were 'adequate', 'good' or 'outstanding'. This means services were able to show at least some of the characteristics of good performance in most areas. And 43 percent of all grades met or exceeded our [benchmark](#) for good performance where we issued good or outstanding grades. This is the level of performance we expect all services to achieve, and it is what the public deserve.

Overall, in this round, we gave the following proportion of grades:

- 4 percent outstanding;
- 39 percent good;
- 30 percent adequate;
- 24 percent requires improvement; and
- 3 percent inadequate.

But progress across the sector remains inconsistent. We haven't yet seen sustained improvement across all services and all our inspection areas. Services performed best in our 'making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future' and 'understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies' inspection areas. And services performed most poorly in 'ensuring fairness and promoting diversity', 'promoting the right values and culture' and 'managing performance and developing leaders'. This is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Judgment grades assigned to fire and rescue services in England in our Round 3 inspections



Source: HMICFRS

Areas for improvement

Where we identify an aspect of a service's practice, policy or performance that falls short of the expected standard, we will issue an AFI. During our Round 3 assessments, we issued fewer AFIs than in our last round of inspections (14 percent lower or 95 fewer AFIs). Across our effectiveness, efficiency and people questions, the number of AFIs we issued decreased by 22 percent, 14 percent and 4 percent respectively. Responding to major and multi-agency incidents is the only area in which there was an increase in the number of AFIs issued. These findings show the efforts that some services are making to improve.

In Round 3, 27 of 44 services had fewer AFIs compared to Round 2. In particular, we closed a large number of AFIs in services such as London Fire Brigade, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

But some services hadn't made enough progress against AFIs that we issued in our previous rounds of inspections. Almost half of the AFIs in Round 3 remain uncompleted from previous rounds. We refer to these as 'enduring AFIs', and this is shown in Figure 2.

Where a service lacks the right skills, it may have limited capacity to manage change. This means it may struggle to address AFIs that we issued in Round 2 and make continuous improvements in Round 3.

Figure 2: Areas for improvement in Round 3 by whether they were enduring or newly issued



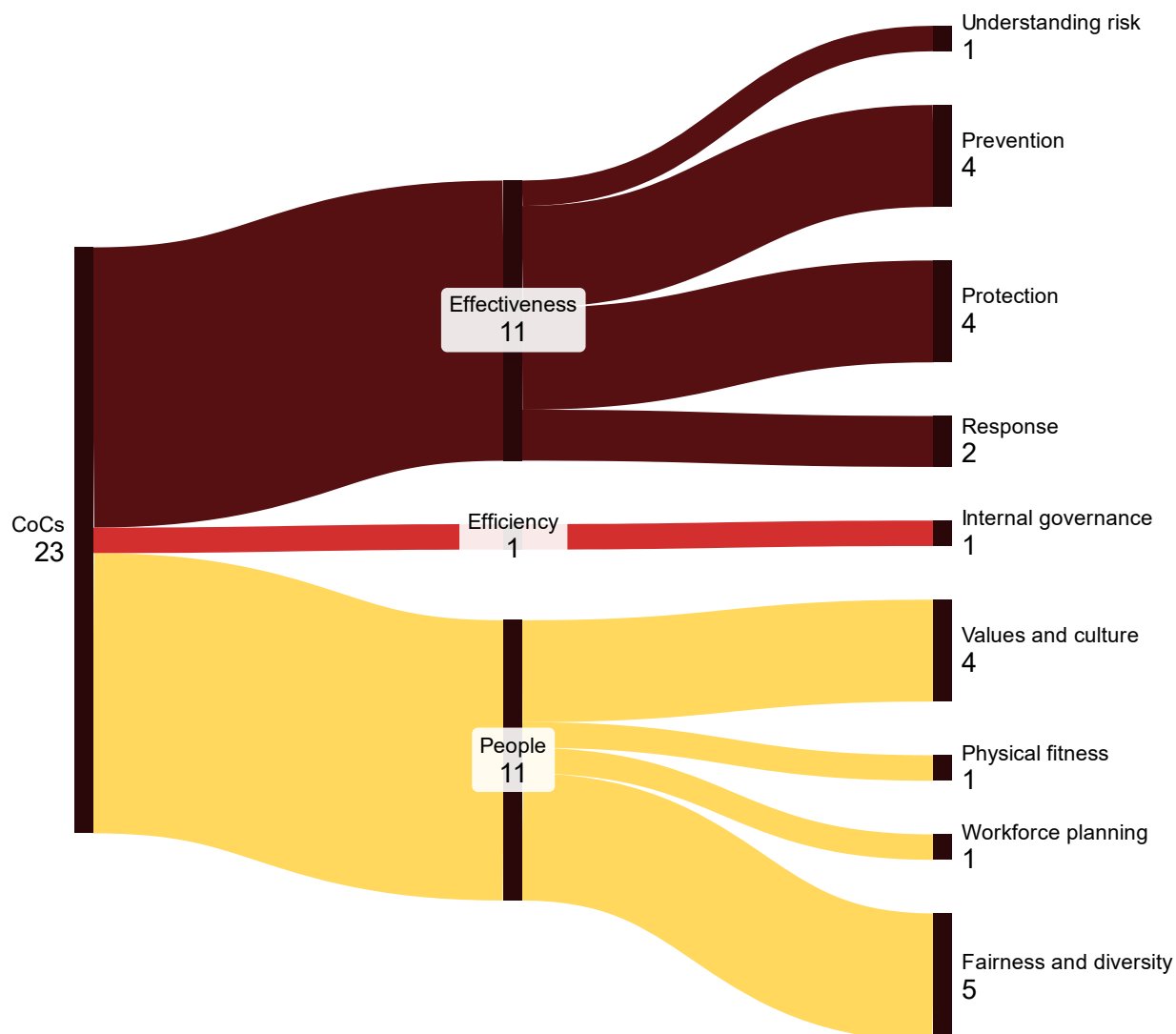
Source: HMICFRS

Causes of concern

In our inspections, if we identify a serious, critical or systemic shortcoming in a service's practice, policy or performance, we will report it as a CoC. The number of CoCs we issued across the 44 services has stayed broadly the same between our Round 2 (24 CoCs in 16 services) and Round 3 inspections (23 CoCs in 15 services).

But there are persistent challenges that continue to affect services. In Round 3, seven CoCs that we initially identified in Round 2 were still outstanding. I am disappointed by the slow progress that these services are making.

Figure 3: Cause of concern in Round 3 according to question



Source: HMICFRS

As shown in Figure 3, we issued 23 CoCs in our Round 3 inspections:

- 11 for effectiveness (1 for understanding risk, 4 for prevention, 4 for protection and 2 for response);
- 1 for internal governance; and
- 11 for people (4 for values and culture, 1 for staff fitness, 1 for workforce planning and 5 for fairness and diversity).

This means that these services aren't identifying and addressing shortcomings in these areas of practice, policy or performance before they become serious, critical or systemic problems.

Our monitoring process

If a service doesn't effectively address our concerns, we may move it to [our enhanced monitoring process, which is known as 'Engage'](#). Encouragingly, three services previously in Engage made enough progress during Round 3 to return to our default 'Scan' phase. We returned London Fire Brigade to Scan in March 2024, Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in March 2025 and Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service in August 2025.

At the end of Round 3, one service, Avon Fire and Rescue, remained in our enhanced monitoring process. We moved the service to Engage in November 2023.

In Round 3, we issued Avon Fire and Rescue Service with new CoCs for identifying risks, fire prevention, responding to fires and emergencies, and values and culture. In October 2024, following a revisit, we closed the CoC related to responding to fires and emergencies. And in September 2025, following a further revisit, we closed the CoC related to identifying risks. We will next inspect the service in early 2026, as part of our full 2025–27 inspection programme. And we will continue to monitor its progress using checkpoint meetings to focus on the improvements it is making.

Services are making progress to prevent incidents

Fire and rescue services have an important role to keep people safe. They visit people's homes to give fire safety advice, fit smoke alarms and support those most at risk. They also work with schools and communities to teach people how to stay safe from fire.

Between the years ending 31 March 2015 and 31 March 2025, the number of all incidents that fire and rescue services attended increased by 22 percent. The type of incidents attended has changed over time. While fire incidents have decreased, the number and range of non-fire incidents attended, such as road traffic collisions and flooding and water rescues, has increased over the past decade:

- The number of fire incidents has decreased by 8.1 percent from 155,063 in 2015 to 142,494 in 2025.
- The number of non-fire incidents has increased by 69 percent from 125,340 in 2015 to 211,222 incidents in 2025.
- The number of non-fatal casualties has decreased by 16 percent from 7,596 in 2015 to 6,410 in 2025.

Advancements in technology, enhanced safety regulations and the proactive efforts of fire and rescue services can prevent incidents and have helped to keep people safer than they were a decade ago.

Fire and rescue services also have a responsibility to help [safeguard](#) the most [vulnerable people](#) in society. During our Round 3 inspections, we found that services were increasingly effective in identifying vulnerable individuals and giving them tailored fire safety advice through [home fire safety visits \(HFSVs\)](#).

Since our first round of inspections in 2018, the number of HFSVs that services complete each year has stayed broadly the same. But services have improved how they target these visits. In 2021/22, 76.6 percent (337,400 out of 440,381) of all visits across England included at least one vulnerable or at-risk individual compared to 85.1 percent (501,123 out of 588,855) in 2024/25. This means that, despite demands on resourcing, services can more effectively help those most at risk.

In our inspections, we identified several examples of promising practice in preventing fires and managing other risks. Humberside Fire and Rescue Service demonstrated outstanding performance in this area. It has a dedicated team that responds to incidents involving people who have fallen in their homes. We identified a similar initiative in Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Promising practice: Humberside Fire and Rescue Service works well with local health organisations to provide a falls response team

The service has a partnership with local health organisations to provide an [on-call](#) falls response team. This has a significant impact on the local health situation. The team helps more people live in their homes for longer, which reduces demand on local health and care services.

We reported on this initiative in [our 2021/22 Humberside Fire and Rescue Service inspection report](#). Since then, the service has evaluated the effectiveness of this work. It told us that from July 2023 to March 2024, it responded to 969 falls.

When staff respond to someone who has fallen, they also carry out prevention work, such as giving home fire safety advice and installing smoke alarms. This contributes to the service's prevention objectives.

Promising practice: Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service supports vulnerable individuals in Staffordshire by providing a falls response team and a home from hospital team

The service works with West Midlands Ambulance Service and Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board to provide a team of specialist Fire and Health Partnership Technicians. These respond to non-[critical incidents](#) for those who have fallen in their home, and support them after their discharge from the Royal Stoke University Hospital.

Between 7 December 2022 and 30 April 2024, the falls response team attended 1,197 incidents. The average time it took them to attend was 38 minutes. Between 4 December 2023 and 30 April 2024, the home from hospital team helped 599 patients return home.

This work links directly to the priorities of the service's [Safety Plan](#) for prevention, including early intervention and targeting those most at risk of fire and other emergencies. The falls response team attending non-critical incidents allows the West Midlands Ambulance Service to focus their resources on incidents where life is at risk. The home from hospital initiative helps avoid unnecessary re-admissions to hospital of people who have been discharged.

We identified another example of promising practice in Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, which has a project focused on rehabilitating adult fire setters.

Promising practice: Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service's behaviour change programme for adult fire setters helps them gain new skills

The [Atlas Programme](#) is a tailored intervention that aims to rehabilitate adult fire setters.

The project is implemented in collaboration with the Greater Manchester Probation Service and provides support and education to change the behaviour of adults with a history or increased likelihood of deliberately starting fires. The project is the first of its kind and is supported by clinical psychologists to understand the root cause of behaviours and provide positive change.

The course aims to help adults with a history of deliberate fire setting to gain life and employability skills and to reduce their risk. One participant became eligible for long-term accommodation after completing the course. He reported back to the project that it had helped him regain his self-worth, confidence and motivation to continue with his long-term rehabilitation.

Some services need to focus more on their prevention work, particularly in relation to vulnerable people

Although some services have improved their prevention departments, prevention work itself often lacks the long-term focus it needs. This undermines the sector's broader objective: to keep communities safe from fire and other emergencies. In total, we issued 11 AFIs in this area in Round 3.

During our inspections, we repeatedly identified services that allocated resources without properly considering the level of risk. Too many services still aren't consistently using the full range of available risk data to inform their prevention strategies. This results in a failure to effectively target resources at the most vulnerable people. And in some services, we found that they didn't adequately prioritise those most vulnerable from fire in the home. We issued three CoCs in this area.

If services fail to adequately resource prevention work, it can lead to significant and increasing backlogs in HFSVs. This means that some services can't manage these delays appropriately. In our Round 3 inspections, we identified six services that had difficulty managing backlogs.

Some services are too reliant on dedicated community fire safety teams to carry out their prevention strategies. And there are often more HFSVs than these staff can complete alone. In our inspections, we found that fire crews could contribute more to prevention work but were often underused or unsure of their role in this work. Services need to better co-ordinate prevention work across teams so that all staff can contribute to preventing fires.

We commend the efforts services have made in this area. But they should continue to improve their resource allocation and workforce planning. This will help make sure that prevention work is sustainable and alleviate pressure from the backlogs of HFSVs to keep the public safe.

Services have improved the resourcing of and working practices in their protection departments

We found encouraging signs of improvement in protection departments. These departments help to keep people and buildings safe by assuring compliance with fire safety laws such as the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#).

Notably, we awarded three services an outstanding grade for their protection work, which reflects exemplary performance in areas such as risk-based inspection, audit quality and strategic alignment. These services show a clear understanding of local risk and demonstrate good leadership, and they effectively implement national guidance.

Innovative practice: County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service is using artificial intelligence to support a range of functions

The service is using artificial intelligence technology to help analyse its data and support well-informed decisions, including for risk profiling and proposing work plans for [watch](#)-based crews to improve productivity.

The service has used artificial intelligence to develop its risk-based inspection programme for auditing fire safety management in buildings (places) and categorising [vulnerability in the community](#) (people). It is improving the accuracy of [risk assessments](#), helping to prioritise workloads so they align with the needs of the community and reducing the likelihood of fire and other emergencies. This improves community safety.

Services are improving how they target risk through their risk-based inspection programmes, but some challenges remain

Services use a risk-based inspection programme (RBIP) to decide how often they need to inspect buildings based on the level of fire risk they pose. The RBIP helps to prioritise efforts to effectively reduce fire risk.

In addition to the services that we issued with outstanding grades for their protection work, several other services have made commendable efforts to improve their RBIPs. This includes better targeting of high-risk premises and more structured approaches to audit planning and implementation.

Encouragingly, towards the end of Round 3, many services had started to implement the most recent version of [NFCC](#) guidance on building RBIPs, which was published in February 2025. Where services have adopted this guidance, we found that staff were better able to understand and communicate the rationale for prioritising risk. This leads to more coherent and transparent decision-making.

Services typically categorise fire risk by building type and assign it a score according to the level of risk. Many services continue to struggle to target high-risk buildings, such as hospitals, care homes and buildings with sleeping accommodation. This is often due to inaccurate risk scoring or poor performance management, which may mean some high-risk buildings don't receive the scrutiny needed. In some services, improvements in implementing RBIPs have led to compromises in other important areas, notably communicating with businesses on the importance of complying with fire safety regulations.

Many services have improved their protection work

Under the Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety) 2005, services are required to carry out activities, such as fire safety audits, to help identify and address poor practices that could result in fire. Services examine premises and documents to make sure that buildings meet the necessary criteria. If necessary, they then use enforcement powers to make sure that buildings comply with fire safety legislation.

The volume of fire protection work has increased over time, with more services achieving their audit targets. Between 2021/2022 and 2024/25, there was an increase in the total number of services that achieved their target for auditing high-risk buildings in England. This increased from 21.6 percent (8 out of 37) to 36.6 percent (15 out of 41).

The total number of enforcement actions across all services in England increased by 24.1 percent between 2018/19 and 2024/25. Services carried out 17,177 enforcement actions in 2018/19 and 21,323 in 2024/25.

These trends show meaningful progress in improving fire safety compliance, which should lead to better outcomes for the public.

But several services still need to make more progress. They should address:

- the consistency of their audits;
- the robustness of their quality assurance processes; and
- their ability to meet audit targets.

We issued 13 services with AFIs related to managing and resourcing their RBIPs. And we issued 15 AFIs regarding quality assurance of audits and 13 on lack of communication with businesses.

Protection departments experience competing demands

While I am encouraged by the progress I have seen in protection departments, I am concerned that protection staff remain under considerable strain due to the competing demands placed on them.

Protection departments manage essential areas including RBIPs, building consultations, enforcement activity and implementing recommendations from the [Grenfell Tower Inquiry](#). The introduction of the [Building Safety Regulator](#) and the increasing involvement of services to remediate unsafe buildings have further intensified these demands.

During our Round 3 inspections, we monitored the potential impact of introducing the Building Safety Regulator, which was established by the [Building Safety Act 2022](#). Despite the additional pressures it introduced, services told us that they were managing this transition effectively.

However, I am concerned that these competing pressures could make limited resources even more stretched. Protection departments may be unable to correctly prioritise other areas of high risk, which could potentially compromise public safety. Responses to my letter to gather views on the state of fire and rescue services echoed my concerns. Some services reported feeling somewhat unprepared to remediate unsafe medium-height buildings.

Services also continue to experience challenges recruiting, retaining and developing skilled protection officers, which further limits their ability to manage competing demands. This is due to:

- the specialist nature of protection work;
- high demand for these skills across both the public and private sectors; and
- the limited number of university degree programmes in fire engineering.

I encourage the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to discuss expanding educational provision and support for careers in fire engineering with the Department for Education.

Services should continue to improve the capacity and capability of their protection teams

Some services have tried to recruit more protection staff to manage demand. In 2024/25, 20 out of 44 services increased their number of dedicated protection staff from the previous year. However, this is lower than in 2022/23, when 27 out of 43 services increased their total number of protection staff. These figures also include staff who are developing their skills and will take many years to be fully qualified. High workloads and staff turnover mean that progress in training and retaining these staff remains inconsistent.

I welcome the [Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 recommendations](#) aimed at strengthening the capacity and capability of protection teams. Once services have fully implemented them, the changes could help address the pressures in the workforce. Services would be able to create clearer career pathways, improve access to specialist training and make the protection staff role more attractive. Introducing a College of Fire and Rescue could also help to further professionalise the sector and make sure services receive the necessary support to improve public safety.

In our 2025–27 inspections, we will continue to closely monitor the performance of protection departments. We will assess how effectively services manage their various protection responsibilities, from audits and enforcement to communicating with businesses and developing the workforce.

Services are making good progress against the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 recommendations

In our inspections, we found that services were continuing to make improvements in response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 recommendations.

In February 2025, [I wrote to the Government and the sector to give an update on services' progress against the Phase 1 recommendations](#). I reiterated the importance of sustained, co-ordinated action. This mid-point assessment reflected our findings from inspections of 25 fire and rescue services in England. Findings from our subsequent inspections of the remaining 19 services further support the main findings in my letter.

In our Round 3 inspections, we found that many services had improved operational preparedness, [control room](#) procedures and the recording and sharing of [fire survival guidance](#). Many have improved how they manage information during incidents, communicate between control rooms and incident grounds and train staff to respond to high-rise fires.

While it is clear that some services have made progress, the pace of change is inconsistent. Some services still have work to do to fully integrate these practices into day-to-day operations.

For example, we issued AFIs to 16 out of 44 services because their incident commanders and control room staff didn't have an electronic way to share the location of people trapped by fire. Having this system is essential as it allows staff to give updates on the evacuation status of residents. Where a service relied on radio communication and paper-based systems, we often found a breakdown in communication.

London Fire Brigade has acted on the recommendation in this area by investing in a fire survival guidance app.

Promising practice: London Fire Brigade's investment in technology has improved rescue and evacuation information for firefighters

Using a tablet to gather information, the brigade's [fire survival guidance](#) app allows information to be exchanged between [fire control](#) and the scene of an incident. It enables firefighters at the bridgehead (the position where firefighters are carrying out firefighting operations) to see real-time evacuation and fire survival guidance information. This helps them to carry out rescues and receive updates on a changing situation.

I support the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 recommendations

I welcome the findings and recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 report, which have already started to create improvements in fire safety and wider protection work across the sector.

The report rightly emphasised that the responsibility for making change happen doesn't just involve individual services. It must be shared with organisations such as the NFCC, the Local Government Association and government departments. This collective responsibility is essential to help prevent future tragedies.

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 2 report recommended that a single department should oversee fire and building safety. The transfer of all fire policy to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government brings together responsibilities that may support more co-ordinated work to remediate unsafe buildings and better align fire safety, housing and planning policy.

In the report, three recommendations were directed to us. These all related to London Fire Brigade's performance. We were asked to inspect the brigade as soon as reasonably possible and examine, assess and report on our findings. We have acted on these recommendations, and we [published our findings on 29 November 2024](#).

Through [our 2025–27 inspection methodology \(included in Annex D\)](#), we will continue to monitor progress to help all 44 services implement the lessons from the Grenfell Tower tragedy. We will explore services' responses to major incidents in greater depth. This will include a closer examination of how services are preparing for major incidents, such as how they identify and apply learning.

Services should make sure their mobilisation systems are reliable and support an effective emergency response

In 2024/25, if you called the fire service in England to report an incident, on average, the first vehicle arrived on the scene within ten minutes. This level of responsiveness reflects the professionalism and dedication of fire and rescue services.

We are aware that some services experience issues with the reliability of their [mobilisation](#) systems, which they use to record incident information and dispatch resources. For example, in two services, we issued CoCs related to how they were managing their mobilisation systems. These systems weren't always reliable when receiving and responding to emergency 999 calls. In extreme cases, this could cause delays in dispatching resources, resulting in slower response times for the public.

Our main concern was that the services hadn't appropriately addressed these faults or put effective control measures in place. Control staff reported limited progress in resolving the issues and a lack of updates. This led to them under-reporting further faults because they didn't think action would be taken. In some cases, senior leaders appeared unaware of the full extent of the problems. [Fire control](#) staff and managers experienced unnecessary stress because they couldn't rely on the system in place to do their jobs effectively, which negatively affected their well-being.

There is a risk that other services could experience similar failures if lessons aren't learned. All services should work proactively with the suppliers of their mobilisation systems to make sure they are fit for purpose and don't hinder emergency response.

Where services identify faults, they need to implement suitable control measures, maintain strategic oversight and record the issues. Services should promptly resolve issues and appropriately escalate associated risks. They should also give fire control staff regular progress updates and signpost them to welfare support.

As part of our 2025–27 inspections, we are increasing our focus on how services identify, report and mitigate organisational risks. Resilient systems and well-informed leadership will help services to continue to provide safe and effective emergency responses.

People, performance and making improvements

In this section, I focus on findings related to people, performance and making improvements. It includes findings related to governance and scrutiny, workforce planning, productivity and supporting well-being.

Effective governance and scrutiny are essential for continuous improvement

Fire and rescue services should have robust internal governance arrangements to make sure they are operating effectively and efficiently. Good internal governance and scrutiny allows senior leaders to assure themselves that their service's activities are effective, efficient and align with strategic priorities.

In high-performing services, strong internal governance often helps to support continuous improvement.

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service has a clear and defined internal governance structure to monitor and report on how it manages and spends its budget. It also has a service improvement plan, which it uses to record, manage, monitor and assess the actions it takes in relation to continuous improvement. It reports on the plan and related actions at strategic performance meetings as part of its oversight arrangements to manage the plan effectively.

In our Round 3 inspections, we found that some services needed to improve their internal governance arrangements. In these services, we identified weaknesses in strategic oversight and scrutiny of their operational and corporate functions, particularly in the monitoring and reporting of finances, strategic risks and project delivery. Often these shortcomings weren't properly identified or escalated within the service. For example, a service failed to recognise and review risks for a fire station redevelopment project, which had gone significantly over schedule and budget. And another service didn't have appropriate strategic oversight arrangements to manage financial risks.

[Fire and rescue authorities \(FRAs\)](#) have an important role in setting strategic direction, providing oversight and scrutiny and leading improvement. However, they can't effectively hold services to account without access to timely and accurate information.

In our inspections, we identified some services that weren't reporting shortcomings to the FRA in a full, transparent or timely manner.

FRA governance models vary across England. Some FRAs are a single directly elected person – a mayor or a [police, fire and crime commissioner](#) – while others are made up of elected members from a single county, unitary council or constituent councils. While the specific governance model may differ, what matters most is that the arrangements are effective and fit for purpose.

Devolution (the transfer of powers from national to local government) and local government reorganisation will provide both opportunities and challenges for services. In some cases, it is likely to result in the merger of fire and rescue services. This will present valuable opportunities for these services to improve resilience and create efficiencies by reducing dependence on individuals and allowing resources to be shared. Sharing facilities such as buildings, vehicles and equipment, could generate savings that could be reinvested in priority areas to help services make further improvements.

It can be complex and challenging to successfully manage a change in governance arrangements. It can create uncertainty among staff as well as raise questions around what governance models will be adopted, what the leadership structure will look like and how resources will be allocated. And it can also demand a disproportionate amount of senior leaders' time. A change in governance arrangements involves significant effort. The transition needs to be carefully managed to mitigate risks and fully realise the benefits, and services should be supported by their existing FRAs to achieve this.

Since we started inspecting services in June 2018, there have been seven governance changes:

- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service merged into a single authority.
- Cumbria, Essex, North Yorkshire, Northamptonshire and Staffordshire fire and rescue services moved to police, fire and crime commissioner governance arrangements.
- North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service subsequently moved to a mayoral governance model.

Lessons from these transitions can offer valuable insights to guide future changes. It is essential that services are given enough lead-in time to effectively prepare and manage the transition between governance arrangements. This is especially important for more complex changes, such as when a county service must separate its budgets, staffing, assets and liabilities from a parent organisation to operate under a mayoral governance model.

In our previous inspections, we have focused on the service given to the public rather than on the accountability structures that make sure fire and rescue services keep their communities safe. Given the clear link between effective governance and operational performance, in our 2025–27 inspection methodology, we will now evaluate how each service is affected by its FRA's governance, oversight and scrutiny arrangements. We will examine the relationship between each service's internal governance and their FRA's governance. We focus on whether the arrangements are robust and make sure the service is effective and efficient at keeping the public safe from fire and other risks. We will also assess whether these arrangements create a positive culture and whether there are standards of conduct to support the health and well-being of the workforce.

Services should have robust financial plans to support them to provide value for money

Good financial plans are essential to make sure that fire and rescue services operate efficiently and provide a sustained service to the public. These plans also support services to make continuous improvements and result in a balanced budget.

In our inspections, we found that most services understood their likely financial challenges. They had generally made realistic assumptions with budgets and considered different financial planning scenarios and potential risks. Inflationary pressures and funding changes are challenges that services need to adapt to. Of the 44 responses I received to my letter to gather views on the state of fire and rescue services, 41 respondents stated that financial pressures were one of the most significant challenges for the sector in 2024. This was the main issue respondents identified.

We encourage all services to fully participate in the NFCC's financial benchmarking work. By comparing costs and operations with other services, they can identify whether any areas of their expenditure are above average and if they need to review them to provide better value for money.

Services should have the capability and capacity to manage change

Services need to have enough people with the right knowledge, skills and resources to bring about change and implement effective change management processes.

Compared to police forces, most fire and rescue services are relatively small organisations. As at 31 March 2024, on average, police forces in England and Wales employed 5,502 full-time equivalent [personnel](#) compared to 906 staff in fire and rescue services in England. In smaller organisations, any gaps in skills or staffing can make it much harder to manage change because there aren't extra people or dedicated teams to take on the additional work. On the other hand, larger organisations may be more complex, with different internal structures, which presents its own challenges when implementing change. While size can influence how change

is managed, it isn't the only factor. Each service operates in its own context, and senior leaders need to consider this when implementing change.

We found good change management processes in some services.

Promising practice: Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates improvement

The service has established a programme management office that is supported by a project management framework and toolkit for managers.

As part of this approach, the service has improved evaluation of activity, projects and improvement, which it records in an evaluation portal. This helps it to implement programmes and projects in its annual delivery plan in a controlled and consistent way.

This has led to service improvement, including a more efficient and effective service for the public.

In our inspections, we saw a link between some services lacking the right skills and their capacity to manage change. This means that they may have struggled to address AFIs we issued in Round 2 and make continuous improvements in Round 3.

Some services struggle to attract professional staff in corporate functions. Competitive market salaries can often mean that programme and project managers, analysts and IT professionals can earn more outside the public sector.

Collaboration can give services access to additional resources and expertise. For example, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service shares back-office functions across estates, finance, fleet, HR and IT with Northamptonshire Police and the office of the police, fire and crime commissioner. This has allowed Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's internal IT team of 5.5 full-time equivalent staff to access a digital, data and technology department of 165 staff. This has significantly widened the service's access to a diverse range of technical expertise.

Clear internal structures help leaders make decisions and manage change well. They make sure projects and programmes are appropriately scrutinised and challenged, which helps to keep them aligned with their objectives, budgets and timelines. Without these systems, improvement projects are more likely to be delayed or fail to achieve intended benefits.

Promising practice: Kent Fire and Rescue Service robustly reviews projects to make sure they achieve their goals

Since 2021, the service has used a benefit mapping process for all its projects to make sure they achieve their intended outcomes.

The service maps the benefits before the project starts, reviews progress at midpoint and at the end. This robust process has identified projects failing to provide expected benefits at key milestones, so the service stopped the projects.

This level of scrutiny makes sure the service achieves value for money in all the projects it initiates.

Services should use and invest in technology to improve their effectiveness and efficiency

Services should make use of robust IT and technology systems to improve effectiveness and efficiency. They should explore how these systems can help them boost productivity and ultimately achieve better outcomes for communities.

We identified examples of promising and innovative practice where services were using innovation and technology to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency. Artificial intelligence is becoming increasingly influential across society, and some services are starting to explore its potential, particularly when analysing and evaluating data. This supports more informed decision-making and leads to continuous improvement.

Promising practice: Humberside Fire and Rescue Service uses information and communications technology well to provide its prevention, protection and response services

The service has invested in its data analysis team – for example, by employing a data scientist and a deputy data scientist – and the team makes the most of its resources.

The service also uses machine learning to help profile the risk to people from fire and other emergencies. It has introduced an AI policy to support this area of work.

AI also provides the service with information that [safeguards](#) individuals, assures compliance with relevant legislation, and helps staff understand their responsibilities.

Using this technology helps the service analyse and evaluate a range of data and service information. This informs the risk profile and helps the service be more agile in the way it manages risk. It also supports the rationale that underpins the decisions it makes about how to best meet the community's needs.

Innovative practice: London Fire Brigade uses an online portal to efficiently and effectively manage property services and repairs

The brigade's property team developed a property portal. All staff can access it and, for example, request a repair or another property-related service through a series of easily accessible categories of work. The request is logged and goes directly to contractors for action.

Staff can see communications, timelines, and outcomes of all repairs. Sixty percent of all repairs and services are logged through the portal.

The property team extracts portal data to assess the most common repairs and monitor contractors' performance.

The team's work resulted in the brigade winning a national award for facilities management in 2022.

Innovative practice: Kent Fire and Rescue Service has invested in 3D cameras to better understand high-risk sites

The service uses 3D cameras to scan and create models and images of high-risk premises to improve staff's awareness of significant risks and crew safety.

The risk information team can include the 3D models in site-specific risk information. This allows incident commanders to virtually walk through premises. The service can also use the 3D models to familiarise crews with buildings without them having to visit.

While we found promising and innovative practice in some services, in others, outdated IT infrastructure prevented staff from being effective and efficient. For example, some services still use inefficient paper-based processes because they don't have the means to digitise them. Because IT is often needed to support wider service improvements, any IT shortcomings can prevent some services from making important changes. Services also need to be confident that their IT systems are resilient and can withstand cybersecurity incidents.

Some services need to invest in and modernise their IT infrastructure. In 2023/24, the 41 services that submitted a full financial return to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy collectively spent £18.5 million of their capital budgets on IT-related projects.

Capital funding is money that is used for long-term investments in physical assets and infrastructure. Fire and rescue services currently receive no capital funding from the Government. This means that services need to fund capital investments in long-life

assets, such as estates, technology, equipment and fleet, by using revenue budgets, selling capital assets (including unwanted buildings and land) or by borrowing money.

Funding capital investments is a challenge for some services, but it is essential to maintain their capability to respond effectively to emergencies. As part of future reforms to local government funding, the Government should reconsider its position on capital funding for fire and rescue services. Investing in their infrastructure would help create safe and inclusive working environments for staff and better support services to serve their communities.

Despite some progress, services should continue to improve their workforce planning

During our Round 3 inspections, we saw some services with effective workforce plans that detailed the capacity, skills and training needed to achieve the objectives of their [community risk management plans \(CRMPs\)](#). Their plans set out the service's current and future skills requirements and address capability gaps.

For example, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service has made improvements in this area. In its workforce plan, it considers both current and future staffing needs. This is supported by the [Fire Standards Board's operational competence framework](#), which outlines the necessary skills for firefighters and how services can develop and maintain them. As a result, the service can now respond quickly and effectively to fill staffing gaps through agile recruitment campaigns and promotion pools.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service uses a workforce planning tool to assess staff shortages, upcoming retirements and training needs. The service has also introduced new software that supports workforce planning for [on-call](#) firefighters.

We found that services that carried out comprehensive fire cover reviews and implemented their findings were better able to reallocate resources to more effectively manage the risks identified in their CRMPs. This included relocating fire engines, specialist equipment and firefighters to help keep communities safe. And in other cases, changes to duty systems (work patterns) on some stations has improved the efficiency of their emergency response.

For example, in the decade before [our most recent inspection of Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2023](#), the service had carried out three reviews. These comprised two comprehensive spending reviews and an operational response review. These reviews have been effective because they resulted in savings while improving operational response and productivity. As outlined in its strategic plans, the service updated its duty systems so it could better realign its resources to match risk. This allowed it to deploy two [roaming fire engines](#) at on-call stations. Firefighters on these roaming fire engines carry out prevention and protection activities in the local area of the on-call station in which they are deployed.

Promising practice: County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service has effective workforce plans across all its functions

The service has well-established workforce and succession plans that improve its organisational resilience in terms of people, key skills, knowledge and understanding.

The workforce plan, which is reviewed by the service's leadership team, is linked to its [community risk management plan](#). It takes account of any new or emerging risks, including retaining people across staff groups. The service carries out an annual risk assessment to evaluate potential vacancies, their strategic impact and the challenges of recruiting staff with the required skills.

All the service's functions contribute to a 24-month plan, which reviews skills, maintenance of competence, new legislation and national guidance. This helps the service to be resilient and maintain the required level of skills, knowledge and understanding for all areas of service provision.

Although some services have effective workforce plans in place, I am disappointed to see that some services haven't made enough progress in this area. And in some services, a lack of effective oversight from leadership teams continues to delay this progress. It concerns me that too many services continue to operate without a clear understanding of the skills and capabilities of their workforces.

During our Round 3 inspections, we issued 22 AFIs relating to workforce and succession planning. And we issued one service with a CoC for its inadequate organisational level plans. The plans didn't set out and bring together current and future workforce and skills requirements.

Services should consider specialist roles and functions in their workforce and succession planning

Effective workforce planning makes sure that staffing levels are appropriate in all operational areas: prevention, protection and response. A service's workforce and financial plans, including the allocation of resources to all operational areas, should be consistent with the risks and priorities it has identified in its CRMP.

The services with poor workforce plans aren't considering how this affects their ability to achieve the aims in their CRMP. And in some cases, although services have workforce plans, they often don't align with their CRMP. This means they can't effectively consider gaps in skills or capabilities or make informed decisions on which staff to deploy and where. This may cause issues in protection and prevention teams because they don't have enough staff to do their jobs effectively, which affects how quickly they can respond to the public.

Services should consider potential staff shortages as part of their workforce planning. We found that most services prioritised planning for their operational workforce. They actively monitor projected retirement dates and the effect of vacancies on skills and capabilities. This informs the need to recruit and train new and existing staff. The more effective services frequently monitor and update their workforce plans so they can respond quickly to unforeseen circumstances.

By focusing on their operational staff, many services give less attention to planning for their non-operational workforce. Services that don't make contingencies for staff with specialist skills and capabilities, such as protection staff, may have resourcing challenges. In many services, we saw large backlogs in workloads associated with a lack of specialist staff. This led to increased pressures on existing specialist staff to deal with additional workloads. Services should make sure their workforce and succession planning arrangements take full account of specialist roles and functions.

Services should make sure their succession plans are effective

Where services have effective succession planning in place, they can plan for the skills and knowledge they need in the future. It also helps them to manage change effectively. In our Round 3 inspections, we found that many services weren't effectively succession planning.

Services with poor succession plans often don't consider how to make sure their staff have a diverse range of backgrounds. If a service doesn't clearly identify an opportunity for progression and make it accessible to everyone, then the demographic of staff is unlikely to significantly change. As at 31 March 2024, the majority of firefighters at the most senior rank were men: 88 percent (110 people). The proportion of firefighters at the most senior rank who were women has increased over the past decade from 3.8 percent (5 people) as at 31 March 2014 to 12 percent (15 people) as at 31 March 2024.

Workforce productivity is improving, but services still have more to do

It is important that services focus on productivity to make sure they can use their time effectively and give the greatest possible value to the public. In 2023/24, [wholetime](#) firefighter spend represented just over half (52.4 percent) of overall expenditure in fire and rescue services in England, according to data from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

Encouragingly, in our Round 3 inspections, we found that most services were increasing their focus on improving productivity. But we also found that services were at different stages in making sure their workforces are productive and aligned with their risk management plans and strategic priorities.

The previous Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire wrote to FRAs to request that they produce and publish annual productivity and efficiency plans. This requirement applied to county and unitary FRAs from 2024/25. Fire and rescue services prepare these plans, which FRAs then approve. This ministerial request expanded on the requirement for FRAs to produce and publish an efficiency plan, which is set out in the [Fire and Rescue National Framework](#). Alongside this, there has been greater emphasis in the sector on using data to oversee how wholetime firefighters are used. This has helped services to focus on improving productivity.

In some services, we identified promising and innovative practices that others can learn from.

Innovative practice: County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service uses a Microsoft Power BI application to record completed staff work tasks

The service's digital, data and technology team has developed an application (app) for its electronic devices to collect information that helps the service to understand and improve its productivity.

The app is already in use for firefighter roles and is now being introduced for other teams, such as emergency [control room](#), protection and prevention teams. Staff enter details of the tasks they have completed during each duty period. The app analyses this information and can produce reports on the output of specific roles. The service is using this information to adjust work routines and increase productivity.

The app has been recognised nationally. The [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) has received grant funding for a sector-wide product to be developed that adopts the service's approach.

Innovative practice: London Fire Brigade's improved use of technology enables the efficient monitoring of firefighter productivity

The fire station performance dashboard enables the brigade to monitor the productivity of staff at fire stations against a range of performance measures. These include:

- percentage of time spent on [home fire safety visits](#) and protection work;
- percentage of time spent on training; and
- average arrival time of first fire engine.

The brigade reports on firefighter productivity in its [community risk management plan](#), 'Your London Fire Brigade'.

This had led to the brigade being able to improve firefighter productivity.

Lancashire and Cumbria fire and rescue services have adopted new ways of working to support improved staff productivity.

Promising practice: Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service has invested in technology to improve staff productivity

The service is innovative in its approach to new ways of working. For example, it now provides iPads on fire engines, so that crews can use fire engines as a mobile office.

Staff can access e-learning, the debrief app and the post-incident activity log on the iPads, which saves recording time. [Watch](#) managers have found this works well, as they are using their time more productively. They can complete administrative tasks on the fire engine while other crew members are carrying out a [home fire safety](#) or business fire safety check. This allows more time back at the station for training and interacting with their watch.

Promising practice: Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service's day crew demonstrates high productivity and efficient use of resources

The 7am to 7pm day crew at Penrith fire station makes a significant contribution to the service's operational assurance and [intelligence](#) functions. The crew consistently demonstrates high productivity and efficient use of resources.

In 2023/24, the operational assurance team completed 97 internal debriefs and 3 multi-agency debriefs. It issued 4 operational assurance letters. Meanwhile, the operational intelligence team reviewed 58 documents, quality assured 54 site-specific risk information files, provided 3 provision of operational risk system training sessions and produced 365 daily bulletins.

The team also led the implementation of [national operational guidance](#). This resulted in the team producing 27 risk assessments, 27 aide-memoires (quick reference guides), and 116 operational intelligence notices to alert crews about new or changed intelligence.

The team completed this alongside its core responsibilities, operational response, protection, prevention, and the maintenance of operational competence.

Some services still need to better understand how they use their wholetime firefighters and take a more proactive approach to maximise productivity. We issued AFIs related to productivity in 14 of 44 services.

We are encouraged that the NFCC has secured grant funding from the Government to build a productivity application for services to use in future. The project is based on [the excellent work County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service carried out](#). I encourage all services to make the most of this opportunity to improve their management information and better inform how they use their wholetime firefighters to improve community outcomes.

If a service effectively understands and manages the performance of its staff, it is likely to increase their productivity. Services need to have good performance management systems to monitor and manage individual, team and overall service performance. These systems should support services to make sure their workforces' time is productive, identify underperformance issues early and take appropriate action. This is essential for services to make sure that individuals and teams are consistently working to clear objectives that align with their CRMP and strategic priorities. High performing services have a strong focus on performance led by their CRMP.

Some fire and rescue services collaborate with ambulance services to respond to life-threatening emergencies and help save lives. By working more closely with ambulance services, fire and rescue services could maximise their capacity and use their resources more effectively. But it is important that services manage such initiatives carefully so that they don't compromise their main responsibilities in prevention, protection, response and resilience. If the Government precisely determines the roles of fire and rescue services and their staff, it will give services clarity on whether their staff should regularly support local ambulance services.

Services must continue to improve equality, diversity and inclusion to better represent and serve their communities

Despite decades of sector-wide focus on the need to improve equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), meaningful change is yet to take place. The sector has made limited improvements, and services have more to do to make sure their workforces, at all levels of the organisation, represents the communities they serve.

Of the 44 responses I received to gather views on the state of fire and rescue services, over half of respondents (25) stated that improving workforce diversity was one of the most significant challenges for the sector in 2024.

The proportion of women in the fire and rescue service has increased in the last decade from 14.4 percent (7,007 people) as at 31 March 2014 to 20.2 percent (8,937 people) as at 31 March 2024. This reflects both an increase in women (up 1,930 people) and a decrease in men in the workforce (down 6,375 people). We are pleased that in the last decade, the sector has almost doubled the number of women firefighters (from 1,782 as at 31 March 2014 to 3,184 as at 31 March 2024), despite the overall workforce decreasing in size.

Likewise, the proportion of people from an ethnic minority background in the workforce has increased over time from 6.8 percent (3,139 people) as at 31 March 2013 to 8.5 percent (3,427 people) as at 31 March 2023. This change reflects both an increase in people from ethnic minority backgrounds (up 228) but also a decrease in people from White British/Irish backgrounds (down 6,227). The sector has more to do to improve ethnic diversity.

Although this data reflects some improvements, the speed of change is disappointing. In our Round 3 inspections, for ensuring fairness and promoting diversity, we gave the following grades:

- 11 good;
- 14 adequate;
- 17 requires improvement; and
- 2 inadequate.

We have never given an outstanding grade for this question. We issued one new CoC in Round 3 for EDI. And we carried over four CoCs from Round 2. It is disappointing that these services haven't made enough progress to allow us to close them.

In total, we gave 73 AFIs for this question in Round 3, 52 of which related to EDI. We found that many services weren't fostering a culture that supports EDI. In some cases, senior leaders had little involvement with improving EDI.

And a lack of good quality [equality impact assessments](#) continues to be a problem. This limits services' ability to fully understand their EDI challenges and identify where they can improve.

Disappointingly, we found that some services still hadn't made sure their facilities were inclusive of all staff. This included making sure that there were adequate facilities for female staff or providing appropriate uniform. We found that nine services still didn't have adequate facilities, and we gave two AFIs to services that weren't doing enough to improve. In one service, we issued a CoC having repeatedly identified issues with its facilities and a lack of appropriate uniform. Services that fail to get these fundamentals right suggest that their leadership teams don't take EDI seriously. This undermines efforts to integrate EDI across the organisation and sets a poor example for staff.

In our 2025–27 inspections, we will maintain focus on EDI and expect to see clear progress. Services need to show greater commitment and tangible improvements in their approach.

Some services are introducing measures to improve EDI

We have seen progress in some fire and rescue services introducing measures to improve EDI. These services are working towards developing more inclusive and representative workforces.

Several services, including Cambridgeshire and Nottinghamshire fire and rescue services, are making efforts to improve the fairness and transparency of their recruitment, development and promotion processes.

Innovative practice: Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service uses assessors from its local community to monitor recruitment

During recruitment interviews for [wholetime](#) firefighters, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service has external assessors from the community in attendance to provide external assurance and feedback to the service. This reduces [unconscious bias](#) and makes sure that the service is acting according to its own values and behaviours.

This will reduce the risk of discrimination in recruitment and promotion processes.

Promising practice: Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has made excellent use of its community advisory group to support the development of its policies, procedures and communications

The service works closely with its community advisory group, which includes subject matter experts, members of ethnic minority community groups, county council staff and [police personnel](#) from within Nottinghamshire.

The community advisory group reviews the service's policies and procedures, helping it to become more inclusive. It can also review the service's communications with staff and the public to offer advice on terminology and make sure inclusive language is used. The group has also given feedback on command training scenarios that has helped diversify the scenarios, and on trauma care courses for operational crews. The group's involvement has helped to improve operational staff's knowledge and understanding of diversity, specifically when dealing with incidents and scenarios that include members of the public from a diverse range of cultures and backgrounds.

Although it may be limited, some form of [positive action](#) takes place in most services, such as targeted advertising of roles for under-represented groups. We identified promising practice in Humberside Fire and Rescue Service.

Promising practice: Humberside Fire and Rescue service has a pre-recruitment support programme for people from under-represented groups

The service runs a ten-week programme called Rookie Reds. Its aim is to support, train and guide people from under-represented groups who are interested in joining the fire and rescue service.

The programme includes:

- physical training sessions focusing on techniques used for carrying fire and rescue service equipment, and other firefighter tasks;
- guidance and training on psychometric and situational judgment testing;
- practical sessions on interview techniques;
- increasing knowledge and awareness about the role of a firefighter and the service's ethical principles;
- identifying the demands and challenges firefighters face; and
- individual training programmes to help with specific areas of development.

At the time of our inspection, the service told us 15 staff had been employed after completing the programme.

Services still need to make urgent improvements in values, behaviours and culture

Poor values, negative workplace cultures and ineffective [misconduct](#) management have been persistent themes throughout our inspections.

During our Round 3 inspections, we graded services on how well they promote positive values and culture, and consider the health, safety and well-being of the workforce. For this question we gave the following grades:

- 1 outstanding;
- 13 good;
- 15 adequate;
- 11 requires improvement; and
- 4 inadequate.

We also issued five CoCs to services in this area, one of which was from our previous round of inspections. Four of these CoCs highlighted significant issues in values and culture. We identified 63 AFIs across 31 services: 23 of these specifically related to values and culture.

Unfortunately, in too many services, staff told us that their senior leaders weren't consistently modelling the organisation's values. All four CoCs that we issued for values and culture included an element of concern about the visibility and/or behaviours of senior leaders.

We also gave 12 services AFIs for a lack of visibility and the behaviours of senior leaders not adhering to service values. Most respondents to our staff survey, 68 percent (7,512 out of 11,077), agreed or tended to agree that senior leaders consistently modelled and maintained the service's values. This means that around a third, 32 percent (3,565 out of 11,077), disagreed or tended to disagree that senior leaders consistently modelled and maintained the service's values.

Unacceptable behaviour is still commonplace in some services. In response to our Round 3 staff survey, 14 percent (1,664 out of 11,529) of respondents reported that they had experienced bullying or [harassment](#). This is a slight increase from Round 2, where 13 percent (1,478 out of 11,486) of respondents reported they had experienced bullying or harassment. We found many examples of poor behaviours, particularly on [watches](#), where cultural issues are often most visible. And in some cases, during our inspections, we witnessed inappropriate behaviour firsthand. This included using misogynistic and discriminatory language in front of our staff. We made the respective services aware of these incidents so that they could take appropriate action.

Poor handling of grievances and misconduct continues to erode trust in some services, and some staff lack confidence in processes to report their concerns. This can prevent them from raising issues, so leaders don't have an accurate understanding of the extent of bullying, harassment and discrimination in their service. No one should have to endure bullying, harassment or discrimination in the workplace. The fact that some individuals still believe such behaviour is acceptable, and that some services don't effectively deal with this behaviour, is deeply concerning.

Services should learn from others to support them to create a positive culture

Cultural change can take time. It is important for services to learn from others that have successfully improved their cultures as well as from those that have consistently achieved outstanding or good grades in our values and culture assessment.

Cambridgeshire, Lancashire and Royal Berkshire fire and rescue services have maintained positive cultures since we started inspecting fire and rescue services.

We issued Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service with an outstanding grade for values and culture in all three inspection rounds. Staff told us that senior leaders modelled the service values, worked together as a team and had an open-door policy. Staff feel listened to and are empowered and willing to challenge poor behaviours when they come across them. Managers are trained to have difficult conversations, and a professional standards manager and HR business partners support them to deal with poor behaviour. This has created a positive working culture throughout the service.

In both Cambridgeshire and Royal Berkshire fire and rescue services, senior leaders act as role models. Staff demonstrate positive behaviours and feel empowered and willing to challenge poor behaviours when they come across them. In Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service, staff told us that they felt listened to and that senior leaders were accessible and approachable. And in Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, some staff have completed active bystander training. This has increased their confidence in knowing how to challenge inappropriate behaviours.

To create a positive culture, senior leaders must be visible, accessible and model their service's expected values and behaviours. Services such as London Fire Brigade and Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire and Greater Manchester fire and rescue services have made significant cultural improvements through visible values-based leadership, strategic focus and well-executed cultural change action plans. These services have developed teams that adhere to their values and have created the right conditions for change. Three of these services made improvements after entering our enhanced monitoring process, Engage.

Promising practice: London Fire Brigade has effective plans that are improving culture

The brigade began a transformation of its culture by producing a comprehensive action plan. The plan supported a structured approach to cultural change with robust governance arrangements to monitor its progress. A dedicated programme team was responsible for the progress of the actions.

As the brigade implemented the plan, staff were involved in developing brigade values. And members of the brigade's community forum were asked for their views. The brigade set up a dedicated professional standards unit to investigate and deal with complaints of bullying, [harassment](#) and discrimination. As a result, the brigade is successfully transforming its culture. Its independent advisory panel and community forum provide ongoing scrutiny of the cultural change work.

Promising practice: South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Not on My Watch campaign helps it effectively promote its values

As part of its culture programme, the service has introduced a campaign called Not on My Watch. Its aim is to build an inclusive workplace culture.

The campaign is designed to help staff:

- know what the service behaviours are;
- feel empowered to uphold the behaviours; and
- speak up when staff fall short of the expected behaviours.

The campaign includes a variety of resources, which the service uses in creative ways to sensitively promote discussions about values and culture. These resources include:

- blogs and videos from the chief fire officer and other senior leaders;
- a dedicated area on the staff website for accessing support on workplace issues;
- a manager's guide, which gives supervisory staff information on good allyship (supporting people from under-represented groups), how to hold difficult conversations and where to go to for support;
- podcasts and inclusion stories, which share the lived experience of different staff groups and build a better understanding of difference; and
- an animated infographic, which explains the power of allyship and speaking up for people who may feel marginalised.

The service has carried out some evaluation of Not on My Watch. The evaluation has shown promising outcomes.

Most services continue to support staff well-being, but they need to improve how they monitor working hours

Most services continue to support the well-being of their workforces. There is good well-being support for mental and physical health in over half of services, and this continues to be an area the sector has rightly prioritised.

In response to our staff survey, 91 percent (10,540 out of 11,522) of respondents agreed or tended to agree that they had access to services to support their mental well-being. And 89 percent (10,163 out of 11,522) of respondents agreed or tended to agree with the statement "I am satisfied that my personal safety and welfare is treated seriously".

Innovative practice: Humberside Fire and Rescue Service has introduced time for staff to take personal well-being breaks

To encourage and promote health and well-being, the service gives staff two 30-minute well-being breaks per week to use at their discretion. Part-time staff have one 30-minute break.

People can use this time to participate in an activity that improves or contributes to their health and well-being. This could be walking, using relaxation techniques or taking part in other activities that promote good health and well-being.

Staff told us the initiative improved how they felt in terms of mental and physical health. They feel valued by their employer and see it is an employee benefit.

It is common for wholetime firefighters to have another job. Many firefighters have dual contracts, which means they have more than one employment contract with their service. Or, in some cases, they may have an employment contract with two different fire and rescue services. And some have another job in a different sector.

Most services have detailed policies for staff with more than one job that include working hours and rest periods. Some services monitor the working hours of these staff well. For example, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service monitors staff with dual contracts and checks to make sure these staff take appropriate breaks. And in Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, HR centrally monitors secondary employment. There are individual fatigue risk assessments in place, and working hours are logged.

However, in many services we found that they didn't adequately monitor the working hours of staff with more than one job. We saw several examples of staff going straight from a wholetime shift to attending an incident on an on-call shift with little or no rest. In our Round 3 inspections, we gave AFIs to 25 services in this area. This shows that over half of services don't have good oversight of working hours for staff on dual or secondary contracts or for staff working overtime. Services should consider how they minimise staff fatigue and associated risks.

Some services seem hesitant to effectively monitor staff working hours as it could affect availability levels. In one service, we issued a CoC because it had inadequate organisational level plans and didn't set out and bring together current and future workforce and skills requirements. The service was relying on its staff to potentially work excessive hours to maintain the availability of its fire engines.

This lack of monitoring of working hours is particularly concerning due to the large number of firefighters with dual or secondary contracts. As at 31 March 2025, there were 3,328 wholetime firefighters who were on dual contracts within their service, and 477 had dual contracts with a different service. During the same period, 5,404 wholetime firefighters had secondary employment outside fire and rescue services.

Services have a legal duty of care for their staff. In particular, there is no excuse for services failing to monitor the working hours of staff who have dual contracts within their workforce. Monitoring the working hours of those with a second job outside the service can be more challenging because it relies on self-reporting. Services need to improve how they approach this.

Failure to monitor working hours poses significant operational and safety risks as well as risks to the individual's well-being. I am particularly concerned that operational staff may attend incidents having worked excessive hours. This may put the staff member, their colleagues and the public at risk as they will be less able to work effectively.

2. Addressing persistent challenges that prevent services from making improvements

In this chapter, I discuss some of the persistent challenges that are preventing fire and rescue services from making improvements.

Services should focus on the main issues that prevent them from making progress

I am encouraged by the notable progress fire and rescue services have made in several areas. However, improvements in other areas remain a challenge. Some persistent issues continue to slow the pace and consistency of change across the sector. It is essential that the sector focuses on addressing these issues to achieve better outcomes for the public.

This section focuses on some of these persistent issues: leadership, values, behaviour and culture and the [on-call](#) duty system.

Improving leadership needs to be at the centre of change

Effective leadership is essential for organisational success and continuous improvement. In our inspections, we found that effective senior leadership had led to improvements in some services. But we repeatedly found that poor leadership was undermining some services' ability to support their workforce and provide an effective and efficient public service.

Leaders should establish clear, strategic plans that staff understand and support. In doing so, they can help create an environment where everyone understands what is expected of them and how their work contributes to the service's goals.

This responsibility isn't exclusive to senior leaders. Leaders at all levels have an important role in shaping culture, setting direction and inspiring progress.

I have seen the positive impact that good leadership can have, particularly in some services that needed to make improvements. Services such as London Fire Brigade and Greater Manchester, Derbyshire, Staffordshire and North Yorkshire fire and rescue services have addressed most of the [areas for improvement](#) we issued in our previous inspections. This has been the result of clear strategic planning, robust action

plans and focused leadership. We have reflected their progress in the grades we have given them.

Good leadership isn't consistent across the sector. We can trace many of the challenges and shortcomings we found in services back to weaknesses in leadership. In several services, we found an absence of strategic oversight, with no clear single improvement plan, poor prioritisation and resource alignment and underdeveloped performance frameworks. Some senior leaders lack the strategic awareness and skills needed to lead effectively.

[Our Round 3 inspection methodology](#) focused on a subset of leadership, specifically how well a fire and rescue service develops its leadership and capability. In our inspections, although we found that some services were making improvements due to effective leadership, services weren't always considering how to develop leaders of the future. Services should focus on developing leaders so that supervisors and middle managers have better training in how to manage, develop and support their teams, including handling difficult conversations. Too often, newly promoted managers are left to learn on the job. This isn't good enough.

In Round 3 of our inspections, we issued an overall grade of 'requires improvement' for managing performance and developing leaders to 17 out of 44 services. These services should focus on improving how they develop leaders at all levels of their organisation.

There are some services that are doing well in this area. For example, some are focusing on developing staff and preparing them to progress to leadership roles.

Promising practice: Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service has put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders

The service has an effective and transparent leadership development framework, based on the [National Fire Chiefs Council's](#) leadership framework.

The leadership development framework clearly defines behaviours required at each level of management, supports individuals who are looking to develop and continues to develop staff once in new roles.

The service also has a clear promotions pathway framework and communicates requirements to staff in a transparent way. It has worked hard to remove barriers to progression and has a non-assessed application. This means once the period of professional development is complete, individuals who meet the minimum eligibility criteria advertised will be selected for behavioural assessments. If successful, they are taught the skills required in their new role, including leadership, management and incident command.

The service is good at identifying high-potential candidates suitable for development. It has also removed barriers to external applicants and allows candidates to apply for roles where they can demonstrate high potential.

The service's approach to recruiting and developing staff supports strong leadership at all levels.

It is essential for services to have effective succession plans and processes to identify and develop talented staff into leadership roles. Services should retain and nurture high-potential staff. As I mentioned in [the chapter discussing 'Findings from our Round 3 inspections'](#), we found that many services lacked effective succession plans. And many services didn't actively identify or support talent in a structured or transparent way. In some cases, development and promotion were based on outdated models, such as time in service rather than capability and potential.

Talent development and promotion processes should be fair, transparent and based on clear rules that all staff understand and trust. Even unsuccessful applicants should feel that the processes were transparent and fair. Unfortunately, this isn't always the case. In some services, we found that they ran selection processes inconsistently. This included failing to keep records of all interviews and allowing staff to be on an interview panel without training. In response to our staff survey, only 53 percent (6,138 out of 11,529) of respondents agreed or tended to agree with the statement "The promotion process in my service is fair".

Diversity of background, experience and thought is essential to a well-run organisation. Leadership skills outside the sector can also add valuable experience to the service. But some services aren't prioritising diversity and inclusion. We continue to see a lack of representation at all levels, particularly in senior leadership. During our Round 3 inspections, we gave eight areas for improvement related to insufficient progress in recruiting diverse leaders.

While individual services must do more to improve the diversity of their workforces, I also encourage the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to adopt a national approach to recruitment. This would help make sure that fire and rescue services becomes more representative of the communities they serve.

There is a need for greater consistency in how services develop their leaders. The proposed College of Fire and Rescue could help provide a centralised and standardised approach to developing leaders across the sector. Services shouldn't wait for this to be established. They need to make improvements now.

In [our 2025–27 inspection methodology \(included in Annex D\)](#), we are placing greater emphasis on leadership at all levels. I hope this increased scrutiny will help support the improvements the sector urgently needs.

A positive and inclusive culture is essential for lasting change

A positive organisational culture is essential to foster the behaviours, values and leadership needed to create lasting change in fire and rescue services and achieve better outcomes for the public.

As I have discussed in [the chapter on 'Findings from our Round 3 inspections'](#), services still need to make urgent improvements in values, behaviour and culture. Respondents to my letter to gather views on the state of fire and rescue services also highlighted a widespread need for cultural improvement.

Many of those responding to my letter felt that delays to reform prevented cultural change from being integrated across the sector. It is encouraging to see that improving culture in fire and rescue services is a focus for the Government. Earlier in 2025, the Ministerial Advisory Group for Fire and Rescue Reform established a culture and integrity task and finish group. This is intended to promote improvements in integrity, conduct and culture. I look forward to seeing how this work progresses.

The recommendations we made in [our values and culture spotlight report](#) have helped encourage improvement in some services. These services have introduced:

- independent reporting lines;
- [professional standards units](#); and
- greater independence in recruitment, grievance and disciplinary processes.

But only 26 out of 44 services have provided updates on the progress they have made against the recommendations from [our thematic inspection on standards of behaviour](#). The remaining 18 services haven't given us any updates. This lack of progress is disappointing.

My predecessor, Sir Tom Winsor, recommended in his [2019 'State of Fire and Rescue' report](#) that the sector should establish a code of ethics. In May 2021, the Fire Standards Board, in partnership with the [National Fire Chiefs Council \(NFCC\)](#), Local Government Association and the [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners](#), published the [Core Code of Ethics](#). The code sets out clear expectations for how staff should treat and be treated by others, and it empowers them to challenge any behaviour contrary to the code. We have found that most services have incorporated the Core Code of Ethics into their work. But they need to do more to make sure they integrate it throughout everything they do, such as training, leadership practices and policies.

Some services have commissioned independent culture reviews to help them identify how they can make cultural improvements and improve workforce satisfaction. Following serious concerns, the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority commissioners asked me for assistance in carrying out a full inspection of the service. Having not previously inspected any of the Welsh services, it was a privilege to be invited to inspect it. [We published our findings in May 2025.](#)

I welcome the proactive approach of chief fire officers in commissioning independent reviews where they believe them to be necessary. It is essential for services to pay attention to the findings of these reviews and quickly address recommendations to build trust and create safer, more inclusive workplaces.

Values, behaviour and culture remain a focus in our 2025–27 inspection methodology. We are raising our expectations for services to achieve a ‘good’ grade. It is no longer enough for services to simply promote their values. They need to actively integrate them in everything they do.

Services should maintain an effective on-call duty system to meet community needs

As at 31 March 2024, on-call firefighters accounted for 34.2 percent (11,920 out of 34,900) of firefighters nationally. We continue to be concerned that the sector hasn’t been able to improve the recruitment, retention and availability of on-call firefighters. This is proving particularly difficult in remote rural locations as societal changes have limited the local recruitment pool. In these locations, there are fewer people available to take up the role due to:

- smaller populations;
- a higher proportion of older residents; and
- people commuting out of the area for work.

Of the 44 responses I received to my letter to gather views on the state of fire and rescue services, 25 respondents stated that the on-call model was one of the most significant challenges for the sector in 2024. Twenty-nine services reported that their service was experiencing problems with recruiting on-call staff. Thirty-two services reported difficulties with retaining on-call staff, and 23 reported problems with training them.

Typically, staff at on-call fire stations are firefighters who live and work locally. They can usually respond to their local fire station within five minutes of receiving a call. Many services use flexible working models because they don’t have enough crew members available at on-call stations. These models include employing staff on dual contracts (staff on [wholetime](#) and on-call firefighter contracts with the same service). As at 31 March 2025, there were 3,328 wholetime firefighters who were on dual contracts within their service, and 477 had dual contracts with a different service.

Despite the challenges of the on-call model, we found positive examples of services trialling more flexible ways of working. This allows them to recruit from a wider area so that they aren’t restricted to recruiting people that live or work within five minutes of a station. Some services are working with local businesses to encourage their staff to volunteer. We also saw examples of services trying alternative arrangements, such as providing office space for remote workers who can also staff fire engines when needed.

Promising practice: Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is improving its on-call availability

The service has an [on-call](#) improvement programme that applies to on-call recruitment, retention and availability. Areas of focus for the programme include:

- a dedicated recruitment vehicle;
- continuous recruitment;
- fit for fire sessions (a fitness and well-being programme for those who are interested in joining the service);
- hybrid working at stations (dedicated spaces for on-call firefighters to work from a fire station to support achieving turnout times);
- non-operational recruitment (encouraging non-operational staff to join as on-call firefighters as their secondary employment);
- alternatives to numerical and literacy reasoning tests;
- employer engagement initiatives;
- offering a range of roles such as crewing the command unit or the aerial ladder platform;
- role adjustment (such as a person becoming a driver or incident commander if they are unable to wear breathing apparatus); and
- on-call availability, recruitment and skills software (newly introduced software that can show where training and local recruitment will make a difference to the availability of on-call fire engines).

The service told us that since August 2024, through this improvement programme, availability has been increased. In December 2024, on-call availability was at 74 percent.

However, in many cases, on-call fire engines were unavailable to respond to emergency calls because services didn't have enough staff. In 2024/25, on-call availability decreased in 70 percent (28 out of 40) of services using an on-call duty system compared to 2023/24. This continued a trend of sustained year-on-year decline seen over the last five years. And, in one service, the overall on-call availability for 2024/25 was as low as 15.4 percent. In some cases, fire engines have to be sent from neighbouring stations, which can cause delays in the service's emergency response due to increased travel times.

On-call fire engines are also often not available because on-call staff don't have the right training or skills to attend the incident. The time commitment to attend training can be a problem for existing on-call firefighters. And it can deter potential recruits when they must balance other professional and personal responsibilities.

From 1 January 2025, the National Joint Council (a body that oversees pay negotiations) revised the retainer fee structure for on-call firefighters. The retainer fee is a payment given for being available to respond to emergencies. This revision was intended to make the on-call role more accessible by providing greater flexibility for people who can't commit to long hours of cover. But many services continue to offer rigid contracts based on a commitment to provide cover at specified periods.

Services have an important role in maintaining the on-call duty system. They should make sure their recruitment processes are as effective and efficient as possible. Services should also consider other incentives to attract more people into on-call roles, such as flexible working arrangements. Once in post, services should make sure that on-call staff feel valued and well-prepared for their role.

The NFCC is carrying out research to help it develop guidance for the sector on improving the on-call duty system. This includes:

- developing new tools to support recruitment and availability; and
- efforts to improve pay and conditions.

In March 2025, [the NFCC introduced new web pages to promote the on-call role on a national scale](#). It also plans to publish a report to raise awareness of the on-call system and share best practice to make it more sustainable. I look forward to seeing the outcomes of this work.

In our 2025–27 inspection programme, we will continue to inspect how services are attempting to maintain and improve their on-call availability. In our reports we will highlight examples where services are adapting their approach and seeing positive results.

Sector reform is an opportunity to make improvements

While the sector has made some progress, there is still more to do to make sure that all services can meet changing demands and provide the best service to the public.

In this section, I discuss how sector reform presents a vital opportunity to create a more consistent, accountable and professional fire and rescue service.

Changes in government responsibilities present an opportunity to advance sector reform

In 2024, there was an election of a new Government and, in April 2025, a machinery of government change moved all fire policy from the Home Office to MHCLG. These changes in government responsibilities present a critical opportunity to implement the long overdue and much-needed reform across the fire and rescue sector. The Government must now be decisive and follow through on its commitment to reform.

Fire policy is now aligned under a single Secretary of State, supported by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Building Safety, Fire and Democracy. It is important to make sure that fire policy receives appropriate attention as MHCLG balances a broad and complex agenda.

Reform in the fire and rescue sector could help to:

- create greater consistency and accountability;
- strengthen leadership;
- raise professional standards;
- modernise the firefighter role; and
- support cultural change.

These are essential steps towards a more effective, inclusive and resilient fire and rescue service. The Ministerial Advisory Group for Fire and Rescue Reform needs to incentivise action. Without a decisive approach, there is a risk that reform efforts will continue to lose momentum.

While some services have made progress, persistent issues continue to prevent improvement in certain areas. These challenges have prompted us to issue [seven national recommendations \(included in Annex A\)](#), many of which reflect long-standing concerns. We made six of these recommendations several years ago, and three are still unaddressed. This highlights the need for renewed focus.

The three outstanding recommendations relate to:

- precisely determining the roles of fire and rescue services and their staff to remove any ambiguity;
- reviewing and reforming the systems for determining pay and conditions; and
- giving chief fire officers operational independence.

These recommendations now sit with MHCLG. The publication of the [Fire Reform White Paper in May 2022](#) marked a significant milestone. But as the proposals for improvement haven't been implemented, the sector has been left without the changes it urgently needs. This has been a missed opportunity to strengthen leadership, raise professional standards and integrate positive values and culture across fire and rescue services.

For example, the Government has yet to introduce a national barred list that holds details of staff who have been dismissed for gross misconduct. This list would help to create accountability and establish [safeguarding](#) standards across the sector. I hope MHCLG will now take this work forward.

Feedback from the sector broadly supports the view that reform has been too slow. Of the 44 responses to my letter to gather views on the state of fire and rescue services, 29 respondents identified the slow pace of reform as one of the most significant challenges facing the sector in 2024. And 38 respondents felt that the time taken to bring about reform has negatively affected the sector. Respondents also highlighted concerns that these delays have left the future direction of the sector uncertain, which makes planning difficult.

Many responses to my letter echoed the themes of our unaddressed recommendations, particularly the need for clarity around the roles and responsibilities of firefighters and the wider responsibilities of fire and rescue services. Until all our national recommendations are addressed in full, the sector won't be able to give the best possible service to the public.

We will continue to use our independent voice to support and guide decision-making around reform, and I will be monitoring progress closely. The Government must now act quickly to implement long-overdue changes and make sure that reform provides the consistent, professional and accountable fire and rescue service that the public expect and deserve. Achieving this will require continued collaboration across the sector, including the Government, the NFCC and representative bodies.

Chief fire officers should have operational independence

Unlike chief constables in policing, chief fire officers don't have operational independence. This can lead to tension between chief fire officers and their authorities, especially when there isn't an agreement on how to make services more effective or efficient.

My predecessor, Sir Tom Winsor, first recommended operational independence in his 2019 'State of Fire and Rescue' report. He argued that chief fire officers were best placed to make operational decisions and should be fully accountable for service performance. I have consistently supported this view and continue to believe that the role of [fire and rescue authorities \(FRAs\)](#) shouldn't extend to giving operational direction. Governance arrangements should enable not constrain effective leadership.

Respondents to my letter to gather views on the state of fire and rescue services also widely supported the need for operational independence. Many respondents expressed concerns that the current governance model can blur lines of accountability and prevent effective decision-making.

HMICFRS needs greater powers to help promote further improvement

The inspectorate's overarching purpose is to make communities safer. Our reports help members of the public to see how their local service is performing and allow them to compare it to other services. We need to have the right legal powers in place for us to inspect as effectively as possible and promote improvements in services that are so urgently needed.

There are some areas where our existing powers and abilities for policing are greater than those for fire and rescue. Under [section 55 of the Police Act 1996](#), local policing bodies are required to publish their response to inspection reports that relate to their local police force. However, there is no legal requirement for FRAs and their equivalents to do the same. Creating parity with the existing policing legislation would undoubtedly lead to continued improvements for the public.

Under section 7.5 of the [Fire and Rescue National Framework](#), FRAs must give due regard to our reports and recommendations. And if we make recommendations directed to them, they must prepare, update and regularly publish action plans detailing how they will be implemented. But there is no legislative requirement, and as a result we don't regularly receive published responses to our inspection reports from FRAs and their equivalents. These responses should be mandatory to make sure improvements happen quickly.

Under [section 54 \(2BA\) of the Police Act 1996](#), local policing bodies such as police and crime commissioners can ask for an inspection of the police force in their area if they think it is needed. FRAs don't have the same option. They can't ask us to inspect their local service.

In my [2022](#) and [2023 'State of Policing'](#) reports, I recommended that we should be given additional legal powers for policing. I also believe that to maintain parity, the Government should consider this for fire and rescue services. Many other essential public services have a regulator. But fire and rescue services don't. Instead, we rely on services voluntarily acting on our findings. Often, services work with us because of our reputation, authoritative voice and the value they see in our recommendations. However, we have repeatedly seen that many services fail to implement our recommendations within the reasonable time frames we set.

Once the operational independence of chief fire officers has been established, I propose that I, as Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, am given the authority to issue directions to a force or service. This would be in specific, limited circumstances where we identify in an inspection a failure that poses a significant risk to public safety.

In [my 2023 'State of Fire and Rescue' report](#), I therefore recommended that by 1 March 2025, the Home Secretary should introduce amendments to Parliament concerning the inspectors of fire and rescue that:

- place a requirement on fire and rescue authorities to publish comments, within 56 days, in response to HMICFRS inspection reports on their fire and rescue services; and
- allow fire and rescue authorities, as well as mayors, county councils and police, fire and crime commissioners, to request that HMICFRS inspects the fire and rescue services in their areas.

I made this recommendation before the machinery of government changes. I am still firmly of the view that our existing inspection powers should be extended. This recommendation now sits with MHCLG, and I ask that ministers give this serious consideration. Forthcoming policing bills to introduce police reform may present an opportunity for this recommendation to be implemented. It has been done before. For example, amendments to the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#), which introduced inspectors of fire and rescue, were made through the [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#).

The Government should establish a College of Fire and Rescue, which would help to professionalise the workforce

In March 2023, I recommended that the Government should establish a College of Fire and Rescue. A dedicated institution would help advance professionalisation across the sector. This recommendation was also included in the [Phase 2 report from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry](#). Responses to my letter to gather views on the state of fire and rescue services similarly highlighted support for creating the college.

A College of Fire and Rescue is essential to professionalise and modernise the fire and rescue service. It could have a pivotal role in developing and strengthening leadership, which would make sure that leaders could meet current and future challenges. It could help to promote consistency, set national standards and develop professional practice. Beyond this, the college could be a central hub of excellence for data, research, innovation and horizon scanning, which would help the sector anticipate and respond to emerging opportunities and risks.

I acknowledge [the Government's renewed commitment to move forward with establishing a College of Fire and Rescue](#). And I recognise the work of the Ministerial Advisory Group's task and finish group, which was set up to inform decision-making on policy design for the college, including its purpose, structure and how it will operate. This work could help maintain momentum and result in change. While the Government has accepted the creation of the college in principle, no timeline has been given for it to be established. I note the Government's plan to carry out another round of consultation in 2025, but to realise its benefits as quickly as possible, it should act decisively.

Delays in establishing the college have been a missed opportunity to build leadership capacity, raise professional standards and create stronger values and culture across fire and rescue services. The need to establish the college is long overdue.

Services should integrate learning and continuous improvement at all levels of the organisation

To meet both current and future challenges, fire and rescue services need to be open to change.

In this section, I discuss why services should embrace all opportunities for learning and continuous improvement.

Services should use our inspection findings to help them make progress

We design our inspection programme to promote improvements across fire and rescue services. Through regular and thematic reviews, spotlight reports and our monitoring process, we help identify strengths, areas for development and examples of [promising](#) and [innovative practice](#). It is essential for services to use our inspection findings to develop robust improvement plans and make meaningful progress.

Our 2025–27 inspection methodology maintains and, in some areas, increases scrutiny to make sure that the public receive an effective service. It is designed to help services overcome barriers and make sustainable improvements that benefit the communities they serve.

It is only possible for services to make improvements when they participate fully and honestly with our inspection process. Attempts to ‘game’ inspections, such as by selecting specific staff for [reality testing](#) or briefing individuals on what to say, undermine the integrity of our assessment. These attempts haven’t been successful in the past. We have identified these practices through our inspection activities or have received reports through our confidential inspection reporting line. Where we find out this might be happening, we will take further action.

Services should share best practice to support improvements

Fire and rescue services need to identify, share and adopt effective approaches to support improvement across the sector. We help with this by hosting events that bring leaders together to exchange ideas and learn from one another.

In April 2024, we worked with Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service to host an event focused on leadership and its role in creating improvement. In June 2025, we held our first joint policing and fire event to explore how both sectors are tackling issues around culture and misconduct. At these events, services and forces shared some of the promising work they have done so others could learn from them.

Services should embrace the support that is offered to them

Achieving lasting change in the fire and rescue sector needs a system-wide approach. Support and guidance for fire and rescue services comes from a range of national bodies, including the Local Government Association, the NFCC and the Fire Standards Board.

We encourage services to work with partner organisations, such as the NFCC, to help them to improve their performance. For example, the NFCC implementation team helps services to adopt new strategies and solutions and make improvements. This team can support services to address an area for improvement we have issued by signposting them to examples of good practice. And services that meet [professional standards for fire and rescue services](#) typically perform better in the relevant areas we inspect. While some services are actively embracing this support, others aren't yet doing so. This means they are missing valuable opportunities to strengthen their performance.

With a proactive approach to learning and improving, and the right focus and collaboration, fire and rescue services can continue to become more effective, inclusive and resilient. This will help services to meet current needs and adapt to future challenges.

Annex A: Our national recommendations

In this annex, we report on the status of each of our seven national recommendations. We also comment on any relevant progress since [my last 'State of Fire and Rescue' report, which we published in May 2024](#). It is important to acknowledge that six of these recommendations were issued by my predecessor, Sir Tom Winsor, in [his first 'State of Fire Rescue' report, which we published in 2019](#). This means that some of these recommendations have been outstanding for six years.

Since we published these recommendations, responsibility for fire policy has moved from the Home Office to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Therefore, MHCLG has given the updates against outstanding recommendations that were originally directed to the Home Office or the Government.

Recommendation 1

As soon as is practicable the Home Office, [National Fire Chiefs Council \(NFCC\)](#) and Local Government Association, in consultation with the Fire Standards Board and [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners](#), should establish a programme of work that will result in consistency in the four priority areas (1. identifying and determining risk as part of the [integrated risk management plan \(IRMP\)](#) process; 2. identifying and measuring emergency response standards and approaches; 3. defining what are high-risk premises for the purposes of fire protection; and 4. setting an expectation for how frequently high-risk premises, and parts of those premises, should be audited for compliance with fire safety legislation).

There should be completion or significant progress in the four priority areas specified above, towards a common set of definitions and standards for fire and rescue services to adopt and apply as soon as reasonably practicable, for each of the four priority areas.

Status: complete

Recommendation 2

As part of the next Spending Review, the Home Office in consultation with the Fire and Rescue Sector should address the deficit in the fire sector's national capacity and capability to support change.

Status: complete

Recommendation 3

The Home Office, in consultation with the fire and rescue sector, should review and with precision determine the roles of: (a) fire and rescue services; and (b) those who work in them.

Status: in progress

The Home Office consulted on this matter in the [White Paper on fire reform](#) that was published on 18 May 2022.

In its response, the Government stated:

“We need fire and rescue services to be able to play a full role in protecting the community, working with health, police and other partners without getting tied up in red tape.”

Since then, in 2024, a Ministerial Advisory Group for Fire and Rescue Reform was established. This group was set up to support the new Government to determine its approach to reforming the fire and rescue sector.

Following discussions with this group, the Government has proposed to explore whether changes to the role and responsibilities of the firefighter are needed. This is intended to help the workforce to develop and increase productivity.

While I welcome the Government's initiative to establish the Ministerial Advisory Group for Fire and Rescue Reform, much-needed reforms to the fire and rescue sector are long overdue. The Government should create the necessary framework and/or legislation to allow fire and rescue employers and representative bodies to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the firefighter. I expect MHCLG to give me an update by 5 April 2026.

Recommendation 4

The Home Office, the Local Government Association, the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) and trade unions should consider whether the current pay negotiation machinery requires fundamental reform. If so, this should include the need for an independent pay review body and the future of the 'Grey Book'.

Status: in progress

In July 2025, I received an update from the Government, Local Government Association, the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) and the employers' side of the National Joint Council for Fire and Rescue Services, which is known as the 'National Employers'.

The National Employers carried out a self-led review of how it handles pay negotiations. At the time of writing, this wasn't yet published.

The review included interviews with the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chiefs Council and other stakeholders. Some National Employers chose not to take part as they disagreed with the idea of changing the pay negotiation process, which they believe is the employers' responsibility.

Importantly, the 'Grey Book', which sets out pay and conditions for firefighters, has been reviewed for the first time in nearly 20 years. This prepares for future conversations on updating the pay structure.

However, as the review is yet to be published, it is difficult to understand the impact it may have. I expect the National Employers to give me an update by 5 April 2026.

Recommendation 5

The Home Office should consider the case for legislating to give chief fire officers operational independence. In the meantime, it should issue clear guidance, possibly through an amendment to the [Fire and Rescue National Framework](#) for England, on the demarcation between those responsible for governance and operational decision making by the chief fire officer.

Status: in progress

MHCLG acknowledges the continuing requests for operational independence. These requests are partly because of upcoming changes to English devolution (the transfer of powers from national to local government) and its implications for the governance of fire and rescue services.

MHCLG also recognises that the National Fire Chiefs Council has urged for clearer demarcation between the role of [fire and rescue authorities](#) and of chief fire officers.

However, at the time of publication, MHCLG didn't intend to legislate to give chief fire officers operational independence. It expects to include work already carried out on schemes of delegation (how fire and rescue authorities assign responsibilities) in an updated national framework.

While I appreciate MHCLG's recognition of the ongoing calls for operational independence, I am disappointed that no legislative action is currently planned to address this. Ongoing changes to governance, particularly under mayoral structures, make it more important than ever to clearly define the role and authority of chief fire officers. I expect MHCLG to give me an update by 5 April 2026.

Recommendation 6

The [National Fire Chiefs Council](#), with the Local Government Association, should produce a code of ethics for fire and rescue services. The code should be adopted by every service in England and considered part of each employee's progression and annual performance appraisal.

Status: complete

Recommendation 7

By 1 March 2025, the Home Secretary should introduce amendments to Parliament concerning the inspectors of fire and rescue that:

- place a requirement on [fire and rescue authorities](#) to publish comments, within 56 days, in response to HMICFRS inspection reports on their fire and rescue services; and
- allow fire and rescue authorities, as well as mayors, county councils and [police, fire and crime commissioners](#), to request that HMICFRS inspects the fire and rescue services in their areas.

Status: In progress

MHCLG officials are working with us on the possibility of extending our powers in relation to the two amendments detailed in the recommendation. Forthcoming policing bills may present an opportunity for this recommendation to be implemented. It has been done before. For example, amendments to the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#), which introduced inspectors of fire and rescue, were made through the [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#).

I expect MHCLG to give me an update by 5 April 2026.

Annex B: Our reports published between 30 March 2023 and 14 August 2025

The reports we publish fulfil our statutory duty to inspect and report on the effectiveness and efficiency of [fire and rescue authorities](#) in England. We have published every report on our website and given it to the relevant fire and rescue service.

Fire and rescue service inspections

- [Avon Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Cleveland Fire Brigade](#)
- [Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Essex County Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Humberside Fire and rescue Service](#)
- [Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Kent Fire and Rescue Service](#)

- [Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [London Fire Brigade](#)
- [Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Surrey Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [West Midlands Fire Service](#)
- [West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)

Spotlight report

[Values and culture in fire and rescue services](#)

Thematic inspection

[Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services](#)

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service inspection

[An inspection of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service](#)

Annex C: Our revisit letters

In our inspections, if we identify a serious, critical or systemic shortcoming in a service's practice, policy or performance, we will report it as a [cause of concern \(CoC\)](#). A CoC will always be accompanied by one or more recommendations. When we identify a CoC during our inspections, we normally provide details in the published service report.

When we discover significant service failures or risks to public safety, we report our concerns and recommendations earlier. This is called an [accelerated cause of concern](#).

When we identify a CoC, we require the service to produce an action plan to resolve it. We monitor progress against this plan and will usually carry out a revisit – and further revisits if necessary – to assess progress against each plan. Following each revisit, the regional HM inspector provides written feedback to the chief fire officer. We publish each letter in full on our website. We sent and published revisit letters for:

- Avon Fire and Rescue Service ([first Avon revisit](#), [second Avon revisit](#), [third Avon revisit](#), [fourth Avon revisit](#))
- [Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service ([first Buckinghamshire revisit](#), [second Buckinghamshire revisit](#), [Buckinghamshire progress letter](#))
- Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service ([first Cornwall revisit](#), [second Cornwall revisit](#))
- [Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- London Fire Brigade ([first London revisit](#), [second London revisit](#), [third London revisit](#))
- [North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- [Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)

- [Surrey Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service ([first Warwickshire revisit](#), [second Warwickshire revisit](#))

Annex D: Our 2025–27 methodology

We have worked closely with the sector to develop our methodology

Since we started inspecting fire and rescue services in 2018, we have continually evolved our approach to reflect the changing needs of the sector and the communities it serves.

Between 19 August and 15 September 2024, we held a [public consultation on our draft 2025–27 fire and rescue services inspection programme and framework](#).

We asked whether our proposed approach addressed the right areas of fire and rescue service activities. We received 61 responses, the majority from within the sector. I was pleased that we received broad support for each of our proposals and am grateful to everyone who contributed. In [our formal response to the consultation](#), which we published in January 2025, we outlined how this feedback informed our final framework.

In addition to the consultation, we worked with our external reference group and other interested parties and experts to gather further insights into our methodology. This helped us to refine our approach and make sure it focused on the areas needed to help support services to improve.

Before we introduced the [2025–27 inspection programme](#), we tested the new inspection activities using our updated methodology to make sure they were robust and fit for purpose. We used the lessons learned from these trials to fine-tune our processes, and I thank everyone who supported this important work.

In January 2025, [we introduced our 2025–27 round of inspections](#). In September 2025, we started fieldwork in the first three services.

Details of our inspection programme and framework

Summary of our 2025–27 methodology

In our 2025–27 programme, as we did in Round 3, we will continue to inspect all 44 fire and rescue services in England over a two-year period. We will maintain our focus on how effective and efficient services are at carrying out their main functions and how well they look after their people. We have retained our hybrid approach, which combines on-site visits with remote activity. We will continue to gather evidence through interviews, [reality testing](#) and desktop reviews. And we will use the same grading approach as in our Round 3 inspections.

Principal questions

While our three principal questions are unchanged, we have made our methodology more efficient by reducing the number of diagnostic questions from 11 to 10. We have merged our two efficiency questions into one. This removes duplication and allows us to focus more clearly on outcomes for communities and the workforce. We have explained this in more detail in our [principal inspection questions](#).

Service in context

In our 2025–27 inspections, we will take greater account of financial, geographic and demographic context. This will allow members of the public to see how their local service is performing and compare it more easily to other services. These contextual factors won't influence our graded judgments.

Characteristics of good

We have updated our [characteristics of good](#) performance. These characteristics describe the levels of performance a fire and rescue service needs to achieve to be graded 'good'. They help us to make consistent assessments across all services and show services what they are being graded against.

Our consultation showed support for the revised characteristics, with 49 out of 61 respondents agreeing that they are comprehensive.

Increasing our focus on areas of systemic challenge

Our 2025–27 inspection programme includes a greater focus on some of the main areas of systemic challenge in the sector, such as:

- leadership;
- the impact of governance, assurance and scrutiny on services; and
- values and culture.

Leadership

Our assessment of how services look after their people now places greater emphasis on leadership throughout the organisation. This follows strong support for this change in our consultation, with 57 out of 61 respondents in agreement.

We have updated our leadership questions to focus not just on leadership development but also on how effectively leaders communicate their intentions and strategic objectives, model positive behaviours and foster inclusive work environments. We will also assess how well leaders are supported and developed at every level.

In each service report, we will highlight the most important findings on leadership as part of the overall HMI summary.

The impact of governance, assurance and scrutiny

In our earlier rounds of inspections, we focused on the service provided to the public and not on the accountability and scrutiny structures that govern fire and rescue services. In our 2025–27 inspections, we will also consider how [fire and rescue authority](#) governance affects each service.

This change, supported in our consultation, means we will focus on how these governance arrangements support each service to keep the public safe and create a positive culture across the workforce. We aren't inspecting the governance of the fire and rescue authority directly. We are assessing how governance arrangements influence service performance.

Values and culture

In our 2025–27 methodology, we set higher expectations for how fire and rescue services foster and maintain a positive culture. We will assess how well services implement their values in all they do, address poor behaviours and make sure staff feel confident challenging unacceptable conduct. We will also examine how consistently and promptly services handle grievances and disciplinary matters.

Annex E: About us

[Biographies for each of our inspectors](#) and [information about who we inspect](#) are available on our website.

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue



Sir Andy Cooke QPM DL

In April 2022, Andy Cooke was appointed HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary and HM Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services.

His Majesty's Inspectors of Fire and Rescue



Lee Freeman KPM

In August 2023, Lee Freeman was appointed HM Inspector of Constabulary and HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue.



Michelle Skeer OBE QPM

In August 2023, Michelle Skeer was appointed HM Inspector of Constabulary and HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue.



Kathryn Stone OBE

In June 2025, Kathryn Stone was appointed HM Inspector of Constabulary and HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue.



Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM

In October 2021, Roy Wilsher was appointed HM Inspector of Constabulary and HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue.

Assistant His Majesty's Inspector



Nicola Faulconbridge

In October 2023, Nicola Faulconbridge joined HMICFRS as an Assistant Inspector of Constabulary.

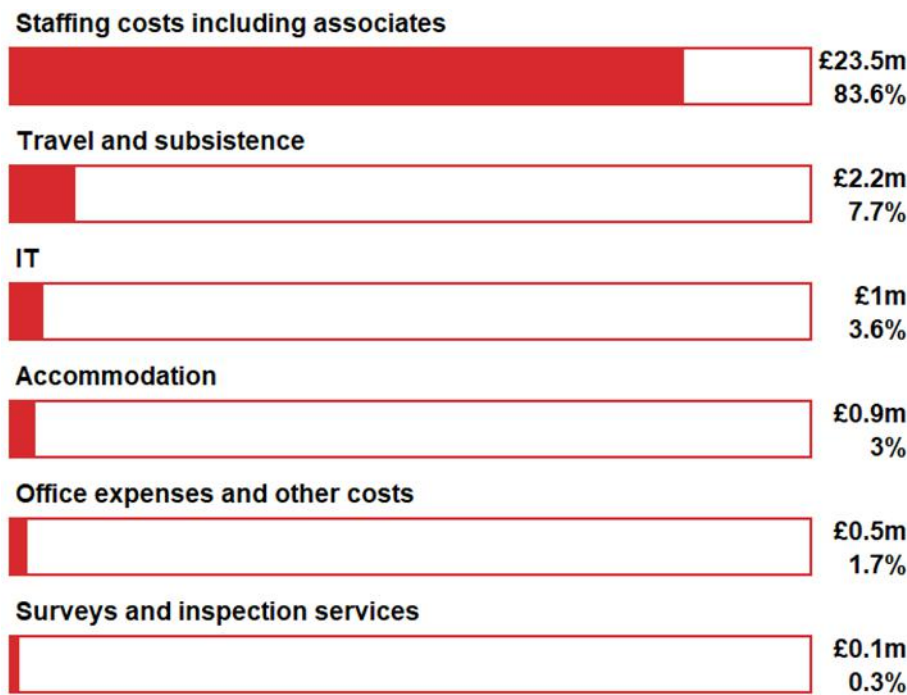
Finances and workforce

Our finances

We are funded mainly by the Home Office. We also receive funding for inspections commissioned by other organisations, such as the National Crime Agency.

In 2023/24, we spent 84 percent of our funding on our workforce, with the rest spent on IT, surveys and other expenses.

Expenditure breakdown 2023/24

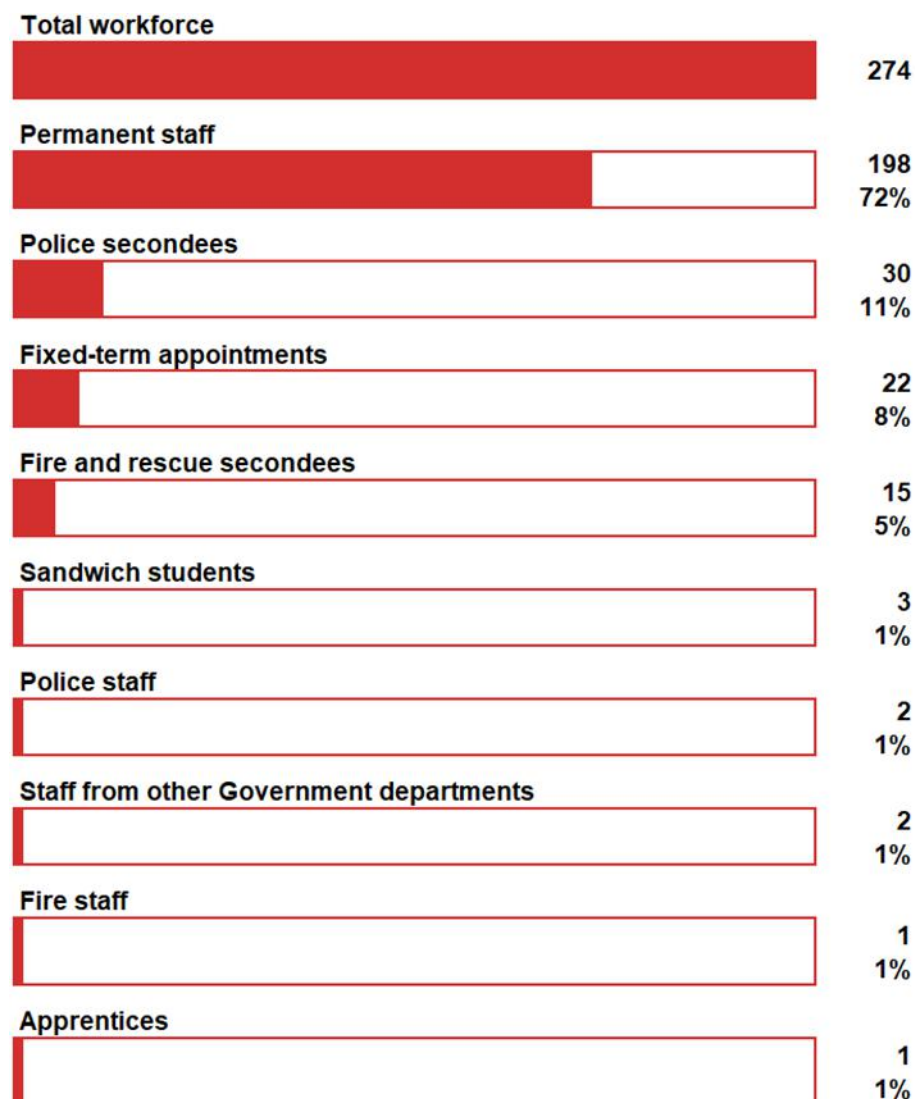


Note: numbers may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Our workforce

Our workforce comprises the inspectors of constabulary and fire and rescue services, civil servants, seconded [police officers](#) and [staff](#) and secondees from fire and rescue services. We also have a register of associates who provide specialist resource and skills.

Staffing breakdown 2023/24



Note: numbers may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

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