

Performance Report - Quarter 3

Finance & Audit Committee

1 October - 31 December 2021



DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE

Priority: Making every penny count

KLOE (Key Lines Of Enquiry) 6: How well do we use resources to manage risk?

KLOE 6 Summary

The Service has sound risk management arrangements, as assured by internal audit, with the Service achieving ‘substantial’ assurance. It understands the current and future risks to the Service and has a well-established and embedded approach to business continuity management. These business continuity procedures, plans and testing regimes received a “substantial’ assurance’ from internal audit.

Procurement procedural and managerial arrangements remain in a good position, with a significant amount of collaboration taking place to support our approach to value for money. Officers are working with both internal and external stakeholders including suppliers to continue to strengthen relationships and planning to meet the ongoing challenges resulting from the pandemic, EU exit and the general uncertain economic position.

The new Asset Management system, to help the Service manage its 75,000 items of equipment, will replace the current two legacy systems is progressing well with the initial project delivery due in March 2022. This will help us support our drive for accreditation of the ISO 55001 asset management standard by March 2023.

The Service has a clear medium-term approach for environmental sustainability that encompasses areas such as waste, fleet and transport, water, purchasing and procurement, energy, carbon emissions, maintenance and improvement projects, and communication of environmental issues. Work is currently being undertaken to ensure a clear and robust set of data from which to target investments and to baseline our progress.

The Service’s community risk management planning is well supported by the delivery of the Strategic Assessment of Risk that has been previously presented to Members. This helps ensure that the Service is fully aware of the internal and external landscape. To strengthen the delivery of the next Strategic Assessment of Risk, operational officers across the Service have developed group level analysis, these will be used as the revised document is developed and published during 2022.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

To what extent are business continuity arrangements in place and how often are they tested?

The Service's requirements within the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) include assessing the risk of emergencies occurring to inform contingency planning and to have in place emergency plans and business continuity arrangements. In support of this the Service has well embedded, and assured business continuity and significant event arrangements in place. These arrangements were the subject of a Member's seminar. These arrangements have ensured the continuation and resilience of the Service during the protracted coronavirus pandemic and the concurrent risks, subsequent major incidents, and events since March 2020. Our business continuity arrangements are aligned to industry best practice, through the Business Continuity Institute's Good Practice Guidance (2018). These arrangements were last audited by internal auditors with 'substantial' assurance provided in October 2019.

Each year the Service undertakes a horizon scan to review the emerging threats and risks posed to the Service, along with the community and national risk registers. This helps to inform the annual programme of work set for the business continuity team, which also includes the business continuity plans that need reviewing and exercising each year. Following the March 2021 horizon scan, the 2021-22 programme of work was developed, and this work is progressing well, with a focus on industrial action, cyber-attacks, loss of power, as well as chemical, biological, radioactive, and nuclear (CBRN) incidents. In support of this, the Service has undertaken and attended several exercises and training events, this includes an in-Service Industrial Action tabletop exercise, a multi-agency national power outage exercise and an operational CBRN exercise held at Bournemouth Airport, observed by officers from the national resilience team.

The Service works with the Dorset and Swindon & Wiltshire Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) including sub-groups such as the Training & Exercising Group, to ensure appropriate and resilient planning for potential risks and threats. Following these meetings, debriefs including learning reports from significant incidents are shared with Officers.

As Members are aware, the Service is due to be inspected over a six-week period by HMICFRS and all these arrangements will be the subject of reality testing. Members will receive the Inspectors report in December.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do we show sound financial management of non-pay costs, including estates, fleet and equipment through benchmarking, contract renegotiation and procurement?

The Service makes extensive use of national procurement contracts and actively promotes and partakes in collaborative/joint procurements. The Service is participating in collaborative procurements with:

- the South West Police Procurement Department (SWPPD) who are leading a procurement on behalf of the South West Regional Police Forces and Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service as well as our Service for the re-tender of the self-drive vehicle hire contract
- Crown Commercial Services, through an aggregated procurement, for the re-tender of our liquid fuel contract
- the Networked Fire Services Partnership (NSFP) for the re-tender of the Wide Area Network Contract, and
- Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service for the re-tender of the occupational health services contract, as well as the SWPPD for the re-tender of the business travel management contract.

The Service is using national frameworks for several upcoming procurements including various appliances, vehicles, re-tenders of contracts for insurance, tyres, electricity, and station workwear.

The Service is participating in National Fire Chiefs Council Procurement Hub with Bluelight Commercials and is the lead for the Spend Analysis Project. This project will carry out a review of spend from the past four years, looking for potential procurement opportunities to aggregate contracts to reduce time and resources, review historical contracts for compliance with the regulations and supplier rationalisation. This will support and strengthen ongoing procurement for the Service as well as the sector.

The coronavirus pandemic and the UK's exit from the European Union has provided challenges with suppliers, supply chains, delivery schedules and an increased likelihood of future price increases. Officers continue to work with our suppliers, contracting Authorities, our procurers, and buyers, as well as our legal team, and internal officers to build and strengthen positive relationships and effectively planning to further mitigate these issues.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do we understand what assets we are responsible for across the Service and how do we demonstrate effective management of these assets?

The fleet and equipment maintenance plans remain on track to ensure all servicing meets legal and statutory requirements. The roll out plan to 19 new fire appliances is coming to completion, with all due in Service by the 31 March 2022. The next six fire appliances are on order and will arrive in 2022-23.

The introduction of a new Asset Management System (AMS) database that will encompass all 75,000 pieces of equipment across the Service remains on track for delivery in March 2022. The chosen AMS is currently in use by other fire and rescue services and the Service is a member of a sector user group to enable sharing of learning.

In line with the Authority's policy, the Service is working to the principles of the ISO 55001 Asset Management standard. A review of our approach was conducted by the British Standards Institute in 2021, where the Service demonstrated high levels of compliance. The Service is currently strengthening arrangements by addressing the gaps identified by the BSI (British Standards Institution) with a view to achieve full accreditation to the standard by March 2023.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do we understand and manage our impact upon the environment?

The Service's Environmental Sustainability Strategy encompasses areas such as waste, fleet and transport, water, purchasing and procurement, energy, carbon emissions, maintenance and improvement projects, and communication of environmental issues. Additional resource has been put in place to manage and evaluate all energy usage data. This will enable the Service to better manage, control and potentially reduce consumption.

Green Champions are identified across the Service to support the promotion of sustainability in the areas in which they work. Commitments include sharing best practices and implementing practical solutions to encourage people to switch off lights and computer monitors, and ensuring recycling takes place.

The Service is committed to reducing its utility and fuel consumption through investment, monitoring, and introduction of new practices. Investments in environmentally sustainable LED lighting are proceeding with stations being upgraded as part of the wider estate management plan.

Vehicle fuel consumption is monitored monthly, and in the year 2020-21 there was a reduction in the Service's carbon footprint of 20% on the previous year, largely because of smarter working resulting in significantly less travel due to this programme and the effects arising from the coronavirus pandemic.

A representative from the Estates team is a member of the Emergency Services Environment and Sustainability Group and work is currently under way to create a Sustainability Charter to be signed up to by all branches of the emergency services.

Photovoltaics (solar panels) are being programmed for key stations, that are critical to our degradation arrangements, the Officers are preparing for its delivery in 2022-23. This project is to support the Service's mitigations for any potential loss of national power and will have a double positive effect through the generation of electricity, thereby reducing revenue costs and carbon emissions, whilst providing backup power in the event of losing mains power. This work is part of strengthening our business continuity arrangements.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do our plans address the risks identified in the integrated risk management plan?

The Service undertakes a Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAR) to make sure we understand the operating landscape locally, regionally, and nationally. This was previously presented to Members at a seminar. This process ensures the Service's Community Safety Plan (CSP), and associated priorities enable prevention, protection, response, and resilience arrangements to be effectively prioritised and resourced through the Service's Medium-Term Finance Plan (MTFP). The SAR is open to external challenge and feedback through the consultation process from interested parties. The Strategic planning arrangements have received a 'substantial' audit from Internal Auditors.

The most recent SAR was published in April 2020 following consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders and partners. The document was developed taking account of local documents such as the local Health & Wellbeing Strategy, Community Safety

Plans, Police and Crime Plan and Community Risk Register. The 2020 SAR ensured that the priorities and planning within the 2021-2024 Community Safety Plan were current and informative, and that the subsequent Service delivery plans remain focused on maximising the impact the organisation has on improving public safety, health, and wellbeing.

During 2021 the Service further enhanced its approach to delivering a SAR, which included developing and delivering a comprehensive risk analysis within each of our four community groups. This information will support the development of the next SAR during 2022 and aid decision-making and planning across the Service. As Members are aware the Service is to be inspected by HMICFRS and they will be examining these arrangements. The final report will be presented to Members in December when it is received by the CFO (Chief Finance Officer) and Chair of the Authority.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do we demonstrate effective management of Information and Communication technology?

As previously reported to Members, completion against the 2021-22 ICT capital and revenue programmes are all on track, following a six-month review of organisational priorities.

Over the quarter the Service has achieved improvements such as:

- Server upgrades and network reviews ongoing. Wider implementation of mobile hardware security management from a single central source underway.
- Implementation of an ICT asset management system to enable automatic recording and removal of all items on infrastructure.
- Planning for the ICT Health check in January 2022.
- Storage and fallback facilities increased, reviews of software with system owners ongoing to ensure upgrades and security is being maintained, hardware rollout continuing.
- Bitdefender to assist in management of external hardware and reduce Cyber Security risks, purchased, and being implemented.
- Security Information and Event Management Tool being purchased and implemented by end of year to accommodate changes of current supplier contract.

- Server/Storage Area Network project in procurement ongoing to now include switches replacement to align functions across all stations, reducing risks and creating a more sustainable infrastructure.

In December 2021, the Service achieved compliance against the National Cyber Essentials national security standard. This will now enable this risk to be removed from the Strategic Risk Register.

The Service's telephony provision is being rationalised and up graded. This will future proof the Service's telephony provision by moving to a hybrid approach of utilising Office 365 technology for corporate staff and a fully supported telephony option for stations that ensures no disruption to communications in the event of a Wi-Fi outage.

KLOE 7: How well are we securing an affordable way of managing the risk of fire and other risks now and in the future?

KLOE 7 Summary

The Chancellor announced the outcome of the 2021 Spending Review on 27 October 2021, alongside the Autumn Budget. There were no specific headlines for the Fire Sector, but we did expect to receive a three-year, real terms Settlement Funding Assessment that would have removed much of that financial uncertainty. However, when the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on 16 December 2021 only a further one-year Settlement was provided, the fourth one-year settlement running. Some additional funding has been provided, but this is only guaranteed for 2022-23, with future years dependent on a general review of local government funding. The Settlement included a core 2% council tax referendum principle for Fire and Rescue Authorities, but also a £5 flexibility option for the eight lowest charging FRAs. Dorset & Wiltshire is not in the lowest eight and our response to the consultation on the Settlement continues to push for this flexibility for all. We have engaged with local MPs over this response and sought their support in lobbying the Government.

The local position on council tax base and collection fund has shown some signs of recovering from the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic with a 1.6% increase in tax base for 2022-23 and an overall net £340k net surplus on the collection fund. We are now waiting for final information on business rates receipts and collections from our four local councils.

Overall, we expect to have a balanced budget for 2022-23 and a slightly improved funding picture for future years. This will allow us to utilise further reserve funds to support future capital investment requirements, particularly those associated with our training facilities. A Finance seminar is planned for January 2022 where we will update Members on the latest funding information, including the detail of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, and what this means for the 2022-23 budget and medium-term finance plan.

KLOE 7 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do we understand and take action to mitigate our main or significant financial risks?

Our engagement work around local council tax flexibility has continued throughout 2021 with useful discussions taking place with local MPs, the Home Office, and National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). The Local Government Association/NFCC joint Spending Review proposal document concluded that “Council Tax precept flexibility of £5 for all Fire and Rescue Services is the only viable option for addressing systemic local funding issues” at the present time. To further support this, we also wrote directly to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, once more putting our case of local council tax flexibility. All our local MPs were also encouraged to contact the Secretary of State.

In the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2022-23 consultation a 2% core referendum principle is included for the Fire Sector, but the Government has acknowledged that there are some funding issues by allowing the lowest eight precept charging Fire and Rescue Authorities to increase their precepts by up to £5. In our response to the consultation, we have again argued the case for precept flexibility for all Fire and Rescue Authorities, or at least an extension of the £5 option to the two lowest quartiles.

The statutory reporting deadlines for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial statements were extended again this year, with final audited statements required by 30 September 2021. With the help of our external auditors, Deloitte LLP, we were able to meet this deadline, although it was reported nationally that only 9% of audits achieved this. The auditors presented their final report, including the new Value for Money conclusion work, to the Finance & Audit Committee in December 2021.

South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) completed their scheduled internal audit reviews on financial controls, with the General Ledger controls audit being completed in quarter 2, and a ‘Substantial’ opinion was provided.

KLOE 7 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do we have a track record for achieving savings and avoiding any residual future budget gaps?

Members approved the 2021-22 budget and new Medium-Term Finance Plan (MTFP) in February 2021. The MTFP showed a forecast deficit of £1.5m for 2022-23, rising to £3.1m for 2024-25. This was an improved position over that previously forecast following the work undertaken in 2020 through the work of the Resourcing and Savings Programme (RSP). This delivered budget reductions of just over £1.3m, with the potential for further reductions to be made if our funding position did not improve.

The Chancellor announced the outcome of the 2021 Spending Review on 27 October 2021, alongside the Autumn Budget. There were no specific headlines for the Fire Sector, but we did expect to receive a three-year, real terms Settlement Funding Assessment. However, when the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on 16 December 2021 only a further one-year Settlement was provided. Some additional funding has been provided, but this is only guaranteed for 2022-23, with future years dependent on a general review of local government funding. The Settlement included a core 2% council tax referendum principle for FRAs, but also a £5 flexibility option for the eight lowest charging Fire and Rescue Authorities. Dorset & Wiltshire is not in the lowest eight and our response to the consultation on the Settlement continues to push for this flexibility for all.

The local position on council tax base and collection fund has shown some signs of recovering from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic with a 1.6% increase in tax base for 2022-23 and an overall net £340k net surplus on the collection fund. We are now waiting for final information on business rates receipts and collections from our four local councils.

A Finance seminar is planned for January 2022 where we will update Members on the latest funding information, including the detail of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, and what this means for the 2022-23 budget and medium-term finance plan. Overall, we expect to have a balanced budget for 2022-23 and a slightly improved funding picture for future years.

KLOE 7 sub-diagnostic

To what extent is our use of reserves sustainable and promoting new ways of working?

The current Reserves Strategy was approved by Members in February 2021 and forms part of the Medium-Term Finance Plan (MTFP). This followed a comprehensive review of reserves through the process of setting the budget for 2021-22. The reserves

position was further updated in reviewing outturn and producing the 2020-21 Statements of Account.

A new Reserves Strategy is now being developed as we progress with setting the budget for 2022-23 and updating the MTFP. Members will be asked to approve this new strategy in February 2022.

KLOE 12: How effective is the Occupational Health and Safety management system in the Service?

KLOE 12 Summary

The Service continues to exhibit a strong health and safety performance. A recent audit against the Service's compliance with the ISO 45001 Occupational Health and Safety Management standard by qualified health and safety specialists from the British Standards Institute, reflected the positive position of the Service with only four minor technical non-conformities. The long-term trend for working days lost due to physical injuries and ill health continues to remain on a downward track and there are no strategic issues to raise with Members.

KLOE 12 sub-diagnostic

How well structured and embedded is the Health & Safety policy, practices, and culture to ensure a safe and legally compliant Service?

The Health and Safety Committee and the associated department continue to monitor the robust arrangements in place, which aims to keep our staff and the public we serve safe. Health and safety arrangements across the Service continue to operate well, with no causes for concern to raise, and in accordance with externally accredited standards.

The recent audit undertaken by the British Standards Institution, against the Service's compliance with the ISO 45001 Occupational Health and Safety Management standard, reflected the positive position of the Service. The ISO 45001 continual assessment visit took place in November 2021 which produced four minor non-conformities which are being actioned. The next six-monthly audit against this standard is due in April 2022.

The long-term trend for working days lost due to physical injuries and ill health continues to remain on a downward track. During each quarter, fluctuations do affect short-term trends for the number of days lost due to physical work-related injuries and ill health absence.

The work-related absence to “physical” injuries or ill health quarterly trend is down by 341 to 252 days. In this quarter, of the six people (incidents) three are designated long term sick or in long term recovery and their days lost are 90% of the quarter 3 total (226 days from a total of 252 days lost). All cases are receiving the appropriate support and HR intervention as part of the return-to-work process.

The total number of Adverse Occurrence Reports (AORs) reported in quarter 3 has increased by 118 to 184 compared to the same quarter last year. During quarter three, coronavirus has accounted for 91 ‘injury/harm’ AORs, which explains the rise. With these cases removed, true injury/harm cases have seen a rise of nine over the same quarter last year. All staff are required to report positive test results to the Service to enable internal contact tracing to take place.

The number of reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) was four this quarter compared to three in the same quarter last year. Of the RIDDOR reports this quarter one was classed as a major injury, related to a broken ankle, and three were reported within the ‘over seven days’ category. All incidents are fully investigated with appropriate actions taken as required to limit the chance of the incident happening again. These regulations require employers, the self-employed and those in control of premises to report specified workplace incidents.

KLOE 13: Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place?

KLOE 13 Summary

The Authority and Service has sound governance arrangements in place that are working well. Information management and security arrangements are operating well, and the Service has recently been accredited to the national Cyber security standard, allowing the strategic risk to be further mitigated. The Service is to be inspected in March 2022 by HMICFRS with results to be published in the ‘winter’ following national moderation of these tranche three reports.

KLOE 13 sub-diagnostic

How well does the Fire and Rescue Authority have oversight and scrutiny to ensure that the Service is appropriately effective and efficient in ensuring the safety of communities from fire and other risks?

The Authority has five key priorities and performance against these are overseen and scrutinised by Members on a quarterly basis. Priorities one, two and three are reviewed at the four Local Performance & Scrutiny Committee meetings which took place in November and December 2021 for quarter 2 performance and are due to take place in February and March 2022 for quarter 3 performance. Priorities four and five are reviewed at the Finance & Audit Committee which last took place in December 2021.

The performance reports and presentations at these meetings provide details on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Service, as well as looking at how the Service is supporting, developing, and ensuring the health and wellbeing of its people. The annual report is approved by Members and published each year in September, along with a Statement of Assurance providing assurance of the previous year's governance, finance, and operational matters. The process of developing the Statement of Assurance received a 'substantial' assurance from Internal Audit and was commended by the LGA peer review team led by the Chair of the Authority.

The Authority oversees and scrutinises the development and delivery of the Community Safety Plan (CSP), which includes the Service undertaking consultation and community engagement. A presentation of overall performance against each priority is provided to the Authority at six and 12-month intervals, with the former being delivered at the full Authority in December 2021.

The Authority's governance arrangements have been assured through an independent peer review by the Local Government Association (LGA), who confirm that the Authority have appropriate arrangements. The Authority's arrangements have been aligned to the LGA's revised code of conduct.

The Authority has adopted a set of financial planning principles and assumptions on which to base its revenue budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), this supports the budget planning process; with the principles kept under review and last updated in December 2021 following the provisional settlement and local council tax financial collection rates and details. The MTFP is developed and aligned to the learning and outcomes within the Strategic Assessment of Risk and is used to support the development of the CSP and is scrutinised by the full Authority. Members seminars are held to examine and discuss core issues before being presented to the Authority.

The 2022-23 programme of Member development seminars approved by Members has been scheduled, mostly following the Authority meetings with the potential for an additional seminar should the White Paper on fire sector reform be published.

KLOE 13 sub-diagnostic

How effective and efficient are our governance arrangements?

The Authority and Service have robust and well aligned governance arrangements with performance management, reporting and scrutiny arrangements well established. This has been assured through the Local Government Associations Peer Review in 2019. Performance reporting is linked through from the Community Safety Plan and the Authority's five Priorities, through to team and watch level. This is developed through our performance management system and through our comprehensive station level performance dashboards. The Authority and Service have ensured that from policy through to operational, the Service is well aligned to HMICFRS methodology. This is highlighted through our key lines of enquiry, which are aligned to the inspectorate's judgement criteria and their 'good' rating. Performance reporting then ensures the continuation of appropriate evidence to support the Service in achieving 'good.' This approach was audited by our internal auditors, South West Audit Partnership, who awarded 'Substantial' assurance.

The assurance arrangements for the Service are robust, with a significant approach undertaken through inspection, internal audit, BSI audits, external audit, and peer reviews. This, plus other internal assurance mechanisms, are undertaken on an annual basis to support the development of the Statement of Assurance. In September 2021, the Authority approved the 2020-21 Statement of Assurance, which for the first time, provides assurance against the inspectorate's methodology. This means now that the Service can demonstrate alignment from policy level through to our assurance framework.

Each year the Service reviews its position against Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and SOLACE good governance principles as part of the delivery of the governance assurance statement for the Statement of Assurance, to ensure the continuation of strong governance arrangements.

Internal audit has provided 'Substantial' assurance against several areas included within our governance arrangements, such as project management and business case approach as well as the performance management framework.

KLOE 13 sub-diagnostic

How effective and efficient are we at managing data?

Members can be assured that the Service is proactively managing its information compliance requirements. There are strategic and tactical processes that broadly align to the principles of BSI 27001 and are detailed in the supporting documentation associated with the Statement of Assurance approved by Members in September. In quarter 3, 20 Freedom of Information requests were due for response, all of which were responded to within 20 working days. The average response time was 11 working days, compared to 13 working days in the previous quarter. There were four requests that were likely prompted by the Grenfell Tower inquiry.

Five Subject Access Requests were responded to in quarter 3, all of which were received from current or previous members of staff. Two of the requests were answered within one month of receipt. Two requests were deemed to be complex and answered within three months of receipt. All disclosures were either made in full or with redactions made for third party personal data. Subject Access Requests appear to be increasing in their complexity. Five complaints were received and dealt with within timescales and there are no trends to note. Twenty-seven compliments were received in the same quarter.

There were 12 security incidents reported this quarter, all of which had a low-risk rating. A full-time cyber officer monitors and over sees a range of technical and procedural processes. Issues are quickly progressed to senior managers should they arise. Good progress has been made against the Cyber Action Plan to ensure effective information security arrangements are in place and the focus is on the renewal of our protective monitoring system. In December 2021 we achieved compliance against the National Cyber Essentials national security standard which now enables us to consider a reduction in strategic risk score in March 2022. All staff are expected to complete Information Security/Data Protection e-learning to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities regarding data. The Service closely monitors the completion rate of this e-learning and compliance is in a good position at 84%.

Progress against the General Data Protection Regulations action plan is progressing well and the concept of privacy by design is being embedded into Service processes through Data Protection and Information Risk impact assessments. Work is continuing to manage retention periods for information held in archive and legacy systems and ensure these are applied to new systems and processes going forwards. Members have received a seminar on these arrangements.

The migration workstream under the Digital Transformation programme is progressing well. Migrating department-based documents to SharePoint is enabling us to maximise the use of Office365 to make further efficiencies whilst effectively managing our data. A prioritised programme of work has been developed to move existing systems to Office365 whilst introducing automatic processes to replace those that are paper based which supports the requirements for remote working and improved efficiency.

Priority: Supporting and developing our people

KLOE 8: How well do we understand the wellbeing needs of our workforce and act to improve workforce wellbeing?

KLOE 8 Summary

The Service has a corporate target to achieve average sickness levels lower than the previous five-year average. The actual cumulative shifts/days lost for quarters 1-3 is 6.7 per person (wholtime/corporate/fire control) compared to the average cumulative target for quarters 1-3 which is 6.6. shifts lost per person. Whilst this has resulted in performance against the target slipping, the long-term trend remains positive in that sickness levels are decreasing, although this is moving to a more marginal position going forward.

Long-term absence was the primary cause of sickness absence in quarter 3 for all staff groups. Long-term sickness is professionally managed with established support mechanisms in place. Respiratory was the highest causation of absence for wholtime, fire control and corporate staff groups in quarter 3. Musculoskeletal issues were the highest causation of absence for on-call staff.

In quarter 3, there was a rise in coronavirus related sickness absence. This exacerbated the increased respiratory related absences which is normal for this time of year. Despite this rise there was no adverse impact on service delivery, and we continue to have robust reporting and control mechanisms in place to support staff.

In quarter 3, 93% of staff passed their fitness test and twenty-two members of staff were supported by fitness improvement plans. These plans include advice and guidance on weight management and nutritional information.

KLOE 8 sub-diagnostic

How well do we understand the wellbeing needs of our workforce and act to improve workforce wellbeing?

The Service has a robust and audited health and wellbeing programme to support staff which is overseen by Officers. Health and wellbeing procedures are available to all staff which outlines all the support mechanisms available to staff including mental health support, peer support network and other external self-service provisions.

The Service has a corporate target to achieve average sickness levels lower than the previous five-year average. The actual cumulative shifts/days lost for quarters 1, 2, and 3 is 6.7 per person (wholetime/corporate/fire control) compared to the average cumulative target for quarters 1, 2, and 3 which is 6.6. shifts lost per person. Whilst this has resulted in performance against the target slipping in quarter 3, the long-term trend remains positive in that sickness levels are decreasing, although this is moving to a more marginal position going forward.

Absence management continues to be a key focus for the Service and improvements identified by our internal auditors have been actioned and with continued oversight by Officers. It is recognised that long-term sickness is the largest contributing factor to the absence figures in quarter 3 across all staff groups.

Management of long-term absence is more complex than short-term absence as the illness/conditions may be serious and involve surgery and recovery time. With any long-term absence, staff are referred to occupational health from 28 days absence for advice and recommendations.

Respiratory issues were the highest cause of absence for wholetime, fire control and corporate staff groups this quarter. There was an increase in coronavirus related sickness absence this quarter which exacerbated the rise in respiratory related absences which is normal for this time of year. The main causation for on-call staff (whose sickness is recorded by calendar days) was musculoskeletal. Through a cost benefit analysis, funding for private investigations is considered on a case-by-case basis if NHS waiting times are delaying treatment and/or recovery.

The Service has a KPI (Key Performance Indicator) to reduce the number of working days lost of non-physical work-related ill health by 5% each year. In quarter 3, no days were lost. The cumulative number of days lost in quarters 1, 2 and 3 is 165 days which is positive performance for the year to date and when compared to the corresponding quarter in 2020-21.

In quarter 3, 93% of staff passed their fitness test. Twenty-two members of staff were on fitness improvement plans and were provided with advice and guidance on fitness improvement including weight management and nutritional information.

Twenty-six staff provide peer support and promote national campaigns such as World Mental Health Day, International Stress Week, and the Time to Talk campaign. Mental Wellbeing sessions are integrated into the Supervisory Managing Performance and Wellbeing training.

The Service participates in two regional groups: the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Northern and Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Services Occupational Health Group who discuss topics such as long Covid, medical standards, and the NFCC National Occupational Health Practitioners Group who deliver evidence-based approaches that promote, prevent, and detect workplace health issues known to impact on employee wellbeing including physical, psychological, and societal elements.

KLOE 9: How well trained and skilled are staff?

KLOE 9 Summary

We continue to carry out training delivery in accordance with the Annual Training Action Plan and on-call quarterly training programme. All operational training continued at standard class size in quarter 3 maintaining the hygiene measures that were introduced during the coronavirus pandemic. Our training delivery is supported by additional e-learning modules and virtual delivery.

Embedding our competence recording system continues to make positive progress with weekly update reports showing achievement of the targets set for maintenance of skills competencies. The recording system has been further developed to include control and corporate staff competencies. The integration of our e-learning product and our competence recording system has also progressed well during this quarter. An internal audit undertaken in quarter 3 provided substantial assurance with no management actions required.

KLOE 9 sub-diagnostic

How well do we understand the skills and capabilities of our workforce?

All operational members of staff are required to maintain competence for their respective roles. Operational competence is demonstrated by satisfactory performance at real incidents, during simulations, exercises, drills or centrally run training courses.

The operational training programme has returned to standard delivery in quarter 3 with some courses recovering backlogs from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic where required. Training delivery continues to be supplemented by additional e-learning and virtual course delivery.

Our competence recording system, developed with a private sector partner, continues to embed well, with competence levels scrutinised by Officers to ensure that staff are allocated to appropriate operational license courses. Maintenance of skills training is delivered through localised training in line with the training planners. The training recording system has been further developed to include corporate staff competencies, ensuring that the entire workforce has competencies aligned to their roles and an effective monitoring system is in place to support their maintenance. An internal audit undertaken in quarter 3 provided 'substantial' assurance with no management actions required.

Seven new wholetime firefighters will commence their training in quarter 4.

KLOE 10: How well do we ensure fairness and diversity?

KLOE 10 Summary

The opportunities for feedback from our staff are aligned to the internal communications and engagement plan and has included a range of channels and methods to ensure the involvement of all parts of our workforce. Communication plans are a standard element of the project management process to ensure that stakeholders are involved in Service projects.

The diversity of our workforce is monitored on a quarterly basis and our corporate target to improve the diversity of our workforce compared to the last five years continues to make positive progress with our actual workforce diversity in quarter 3 being 22.3% against a target of 21.3%.

We continue to use social media as a key part of our positive attraction work. Community profile information is available to crews and will strengthen our community engagement activities enabling us to better target our recruitment and social media campaigns.

The Service's promotions processes have been designed to promote fair promotion opportunities for all. The new process is now embedding and the number of people entering the promotion process continues to increase. An evaluation of the promotion process took place in quarter 2 and an action plan has been developed and is being implemented.

The development and testing of new online leavers process has been significantly delayed but is now nearing completion. Some further development is expected before this process can 'go live' on a revised date of 1 April 2022.

KLOE 10 sub-diagnostic

How well do leaders seek feedback and challenge from all parts of the workforce?

The Service has a structured approach to staff communications and engagement. An internal communications engagement plan is in place to ensure there is opportunity for all parts of the workforce to provide feedback and challenge to leaders. The HMICFRS will be examining and reality testing these arrangements and their report will be tabled to the Authority when it is received in mid-December.

In quarter 3, our communications and engagement has involved:

- Question Time dial in sessions for on-call staff in November and December
- regular one to ones and team meetings over the phone and using video calls, and
- six Managers Engagement Sessions in November attended by over 180 managers virtually and face to face.

The on-call focussed Question Time sessions were well attended and will continue on a six-monthly basis. A review is also being undertaken into the approach taken for Service-wide Question Times to ensure these are as effective as they can be in response to staff needs.

Evaluation of the Managers' Engagement Sessions indicated positive feedback from respondents.

Communication plans for Service projects are developed and monitored as part of the project management process and this has included, for example, communications and engagement opportunities for staff in relation to the HMICFRS inspection.

The Service continues to engage with representative bodies on a regular and structured basis through liaison meetings attended by the Director of People and Director of Community Safety. This enables effective and timely two-way dialogue between the Service and staff representatives.

KLOE 10 sub-diagnostic

How well do we identify and address potential disproportionality in recruitment, retention, and progression?

The Service's recruitment processes are transparent and reviewed to help ensure there are no unintentional barriers to recruitment. A comprehensive system and database has been co-designed with staff and managers. Again, these will be examined by the Inspectorate.

Initiatives already in place to support a diverse workforce include:

- interviewers receiving unconscious bias training via Leaders Forums and e-learning packages developing station level demographic profiling to enable better targeting of on-call recruitment
- attending a range of community and partnership events to demonstrate the diverse roles undertaken by the Service
- stations taking part in school visits and careers fayres to help change the messaging around female firefighters
- providing reasonable adjustment during the recruitment process and employment for those living with a disability to ensure equal access
- positive attraction tools such as 'have a go' days, Facebook live sessions, #BeOneOfUs and #NeedMore campaigns on social media
- representatives from our staff networks providing 'buddy' support to potential applicants
- staff testimonials on the Service's website to promote the benefits of working for the Service, and
- a new e-recruitment system with an improved user experience.

Promotions processes have been designed to promote fair promotion opportunities for all. Thirty people entered the promotion process this quarter and reflected the diversity profile of the operational workforce. Nine people were successfully promoted from the Crew Manager and Watch Manager promotions pool this quarter; one was female.

The diversity of our workforce is monitored on a quarterly basis and our corporate target to improve the diversity of our workforce as a whole compared to the last five years continues to make positive progress with our actual workforce diversity in quarter 3 being 22.3% against a target of 21.3%.

In quarter 3 there were six new wholetime starters, all were male, heterosexual, white British. Of the 23 new on-call starters in this quarter, 18 were male and 5 were female; 82% were white British and 47% were in the age group of 25 to 35. There were no new starters in Fire Control during this quarter. Of the 13 new corporate starters in this quarter, 12 were aged between 17 and 45; eight were male, 10 were white British and none had declared a disability.

There were 31 leavers in quarter 3 – nine wholetime (29%), 12 on-call (39%) and 10 corporate (32%). There were no leavers in Fire Control this quarter. Eight leavers were female (26%), and 23 leavers were male (74%). Half of all leavers were in the 46-55 age group (15) with 22% in the 36-45 age group (7) and 16% in the 25-35 age group (5). There were no significant trends in terms of sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin or religion and belief.

The top three primary reasons for leaving for all staff were:

1. *Retirement* with 10 leavers (32%) selecting this reason
2. *Personal/Work Commitments* with seven leavers (22%) selecting this reason, and
3. *Obtained Employment Elsewhere* with four leavers (13%) selecting this reason.

The development and testing of new online leavers process has been significantly delayed but is now nearing completion. Some further development is expected before this process can 'go live' on a revised date of 1 April 2022. The new process will make leavers discussions mandatory and will allow for better analysis of data and trends.

KLOE 11: How well do we develop leadership and capability?

KLOE 11 Summary

All joiners are invited to a corporate induction. The inductions have returned to a face-to-face format with the first induction session held in November 2021.

The 1:1 process has embedded extremely well. The new 12-month roll out period for the 1:1 process commenced in quarter 2 with a six-month evaluation to be completed at end of quarter 3.

Following promotion, staff meet with the Learning & Development team to identify the development programme appropriate to their role.

The Service's Leadership Development Programme ensures leaders at each level in the organisation are equipped with the skills to successfully carry out their role. Middle and strategic managers attend our Leaders Forum which consists of two hour 'bitesize' workshops on a bi-monthly basis.

Supervisory managers undertake their initial incident command training using the facilities at the Fire Service College, this enables them to be assessed at a range of incidents. A comprehensive and structured rota group training programme is in place for Flexible Duty Officers. This ensures skills are refreshed and provides a good practice forum to share and learn from incidents recently attended.

In quarter 3, 30 Service personnel were undertaking apprenticeships which represents 2.2% of staff. The public sector target stands at 2.3%. The Service apprenticeships cover a wide range of areas including Operational Firefighter, Emergency Contact Handler (Control Firefighters), Leadership Development, Finance, Human Resources and Facilities Management.

Our coaching procedure also supports staff in their development. The Service have several coaches qualified at level 3 and level 5.

KLOE 11 sub-diagnostic

How well do we manage and develop the individual performance of our staff?

All joiners are invited to a corporate induction and guidance is provided to line managers when inducting their new starters. In quarter 3 there was one corporate induction session held in November 2021.

Following the corporate induction, a survey regarding the effectiveness of the process is sent out. Positive feedback has been provided advising that the induction met or exceeded expectations.

During the coronavirus pandemic, due to different working practices, probationary periods have been extended from six to nine months to support individuals further in their new roles. We also evaluate how successful the induction period has been for a new starter with data from probation reviews.

KLOE 11 sub-diagnostic

To what extent are the career pathways of all staff effectively managed?

Following promotion, staff meet with the Learning & Development team to identify the development programme appropriate to their role. Relevant courses, mentoring, coaching, and e-learning programmes are highlighted and progress against their development pathway is monitored. For those at Station Manager level these have included a role induction. The role induction programme for supervisory managers has been developed and will be delivered in quarter 4 by instructors selected from the refreshed Leadership Consultancy Group.

The Service's Leadership Development Programme ensures leaders at each level in the organisation are equipped with the skills to successfully carry out their role. This programme has continued in an online delivery format and the Leaders Forum which consists of all middle and strategic managers, now consists of two hour 'bitesize' workshops on a bi-monthly basis. The programme includes leadership topics identified in our Strategic Assessment of Risk as well as topics highlighted through an attendee survey.

Incident command training also continues using the facilities at the Fire Service College, enabling our supervisory managers to be assessed at a range of incidents. Structured rota group training for Flexible Duty Officers ensures the opportunity to refresh skills and knowledge as well as providing a forum to share and learn from incidents recently attended. This occurs every Friday morning to coincide with the on-coming duty group.

Figures for quarter 3 show that 30 Service personnel are undertaking apprenticeships which represents 2.2% of staff. The public sector target stands at 2.3%. The Service apprenticeships cover a wide range of areas including Operational Firefighter, Emergency Contact Handler (Control Firefighters), Leadership Development, Finance, Human Resources and Facilities Management.

Our coaching procedure also supports staff in their development. The Service have several coaches qualified at level 3 and level 5.