

Performance report - Quarter 3

Finance & Audit Committee

1 October - 31 December 2023



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's business continuity, significant event and risk management arrangements remain well embedded, assured and aligned, ensuring the Service continues to meet the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act (2004). They are inspected through His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service inspections and also audited via Internal Audit. The Service is currently preparing for the South West Audit Partnership to undertake an audit against our business continuity arrangements during quarter 4.

Procurement procedural and managerial arrangements continue to be in a positive position, with a key focus and approach to collaborative procurements, to support our approach to value for money. The Service also continues to make good use of national procurement contracts, which includes actively promoting and partaking in collaborative/ joint procurements. With the Procurement Act 2023 (new legislation) gaining Royal Assent on 26 October 2023, the Service has engaged in the drop-in sessions offered by the Cabinet Office. These sessions have been positive for staff as they provide an overview of the changes, impacts as well as raising awareness. The Service has also set up a page on our website to support our suppliers, which includes links to the relevant information on the Cabinet Office site.

The Service was successfully accredited to the International Standards Organisation's ISO55001 in Asset Management during May 2023 and is preparing the British Standards Institute to undertake their next audit in May 2024, to retain the accreditation. This provides positive assurance across our asset management.

Following the recent nationwide concerns in relation to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RACC), the Service has undertaken a review of its estate, no RACC has been located. The estate teams, in addition to their business-as-usual requirements, continue to progress the Training Centre projects and, following the recruitment of an additional post, the wider strategic estate review should commence by the end of quarter 4.

The solar panel installations continue, with three stations now complete and the remaining two on target for completion by the end of quarter 4. Following this, the Service will be working to analyse the impacts upon energy usage and consumption. To support the decision making for the next phase of work, the Heat Decarbonisation Energy audit was undertaken during quarter 2. The final report is now expected in quarter 4, which will help the Service to plan for the future environmental sustainability programme.

Information and Communications Technology capital and revenue programmes remain broadly on track, albeit with some amendments to the programming of activity to accommodate and plan for the worldwide supply issues, resulting global economic shocks, as well as ongoing supplier price increases. There are some expected and some unexpected cost increases arising from inflationary pressures, changes to supplier offerings (e.g. cloud only) and costs due to supply chain disruption. Despite this, the Service continues to invest in key initiatives for improved technical sustainability and value for money to support front line services with affordable modern technology.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

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

The Service has a strong understanding of the current and future risks and threats to the Service. This is gained through regular horizon scanning, working as part of the Local Resilience Forums, having robust risk management arrangements across the Service and undertaking work like the Strategic Assessment of Risk. The Service's corporate risk management arrangements are regularly audited to ensure that they remain appropriate and comprehensive. Our internal auditors awarded the Service with 'substantial' assurance during the most recent audit.

Our risk management arrangements provide clear awareness of the areas of focus and priorities within our business continuity arrangements. Having a strong link between our risk management arrangements and business continuity management ensures good planning and preparations, the continued maintenance of our critical activities and the continuation of service delivery through challenging times.

The Service's Business Continuity arrangements remain aligned to the Business Continuity Institute's (BCI) Good Practice Guidance (2018), ensuring that our arrangements are effective and strong. Our last audit into our business continuity arrangements received 'substantial' assurance in 2018. Since this time, the Service has also had these arrangements assured by the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspectorate, through both full inspections and also through the thematic 'response to covid' inspection. A subsequent full internal audit will be undertaken in quarter 4 this year. Our business continuity, significant event and risk management arrangements remain well embedded and assured and aligned, ensuring the Service continues to meet the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act (2004).

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?

Procurement procedural and managerial arrangements continue to be in a positive position, with a continued focus and approach to collaborative procurements to support our approach to value for money. The Service continues to make good use of national procurement contracts, which includes actively promoting and partaking in collaborative/ joint procurements. The Service is currently participating in collaborative procurements for:

- A command-and-control system with the Networked Fire Services Partnership, led by Hampshire County Council procurement team. This is currently out to tender. This procurement also includes Kent Fire & Rescue Service, due to them joining the partnership.
- Liquid Fuel, led by the Crown Commercial Services, with several public sector bodies participating in a mini competition exercise. This will enable the Service to have one contract to cover our bulk fuel supplies for both Estates and Fleet.
- Fuel Cards including electric vehicle cards and charging within the provision. The Service is currently progressing a contract resulting from this procurement, which includes some savings, such as discounts on pump prices.
- Water and Ancillary Services, led by Crown Commercial Services, participating in a bulk aggregation e-Auction exercise. This is a re-tendering for these services through a different Framework Agreement.

The transition to the new e-Tendering Procurement Hub continues. This is currently expected to go live as of 1 April 2024, with the old system to cease at the end of March 2024.

When procuring goods, services and works, the Service continues to follow the national and local level regulations, including adhering to the Public Procurement Regulations. As part of this, the Service is required to ensure that the principles of transparency and fairness are applied throughout all stages of the procurement processes. Our approach is published on the Service's website. The Procurement Act 2023 (new legislation) gained Royal Assent on 26 October 2023. Secondary legislation is currently passing through Parliament. Cabinet Office Knowledge Drop Sessions for Contracting Authorities has been rolled out across the Service, to provide an overview of the changes, impacts as well as raising awareness. The Service has also set up a page on our website to support our suppliers which includes links to the relevant information on the Cabinet Office site.

Officers continue to work with both internal and external stakeholders, including suppliers, to strengthen relationships and planning to meet the ongoing challenges and the general uncertain economic position.

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?

Maintenance of the Service's accreditation to ISO55001 Asset Management continues with preparation well advanced for the next external audits which are programmed through the British Standards Institute for May 2024. As part of the requirements to continue with accreditation to this standard, the Service is required to undertake regular mini audits across our asset management arrangements. This is developed annually and is aligned to our wider audit programmes, including those for our ISO45001 Health and Safety accreditation.

The Service continues to keep abreast of the economic situation with regards to parts, materials, and labour costs increasing significantly, along with global supply chain disruptions and challenges. Decisions are balanced with the need for operational efficiency and cost savings. The Service aims to remain agile and adapt to the changing market conditions, to ensure the best value.

The Service manages its asset and equipment, through our Asset Management System, 'Bluelight'. This system is embedded across the Service and staff have the tools and access needed to ensure compliance. To continue to strengthen and develop this system, the Service has set up and leads a national group for the sector, with fire services working together to improve the software, alongside the providing organisation.

Following the recent nationwide concerns in relation to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RACC), the Service has undertaken a review of its estate. Following this review no RACC has been located. The estate teams, in addition to their business-as-usual requirements, continue to progress the Training Centre projects and, following the recruitment of an additional post, the wider estate rationalisation programme should commence by the end of quarter 4.

The fleet programme continues to progress well, with the team keeping a firm awareness of the challenges with the supply chains and delays. The vehicles across our fleet are generally procured through frameworks and the teams constantly assess products and prices, across the market, for best value. The Service's first fully electric van was due in quarter 3 but delivery delays mean

this is now expected in quarter 4. In addition, our teams are currently placing the orders for two replacement workshop vans, to replace the ageing diesel vans. These will both be replaced with electric vans, which are cheaper than purchasing diesel replacements. Fleet are working with Estates to ensure infrastructure will be in place to support these.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

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

The Service has completed three installations of photovoltaics (solar panels) at Blandford, Marlborough and Sturminster Newton fire stations and is currently installing panels at Wareham and Warminster fire stations. This will be complete before the end of the year. Once these are operating the Service will measure their effectiveness against our existing energy usage at the five sites to evaluate how effective they are and provide an indication of payback time. Following this evaluation, the Service will have a clear approach to the wider estate.

The Service has commissioned a consultancy to carry out an energy audit across several sites. This will provide a comprehensive overview of the Services' current energy usage and emissions, as well as recommendations for how to reduce carbon emissions. The Service will use the energy audit report to inform our decisions and help us to evaluate potential investment opportunities. The Service is now expecting this report in early quarter 4. This will then be used to plan our future approach and priorities.

Environmental impact assessments form part of everyday work across the Service, with these linked to our projects, decision-making, and procurement. This aids the Service to make sustainable decisions considering our impact and carbon footprint. By conducting these assessments, the Service can identify potential issues that need to be considered before making a decision. This allows the Service to make more informed decisions that protect the environment and reduce the Service's carbon footprint.

The small environmental team, consisting of two members, has been impacted by the departure of the Environmental & Compliance Manager, our Service expert and lead. Following a successful recruitment process, this post will be filled in early February 2024. A key focus for the team will be the development of low-cost environmental gains to be achieved through improving our Behavioural Change programme and our Green Champions across the service.

The National Fire Chiefs Council has published a toolkit with guidance and case studies of good practice. The Service will use the toolkit to help us create effective strategies for learning and training our staff. The Service will also use it to guide the design and implementation of our learning interventions and to evaluate the effectiveness of our programme.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

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

The Service delivers a Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAR) on a two-yearly basis. This document incorporates essential local, national, and global references, along with Group Level PESTELO (political, economic, social, technological, environmental, legal and organisational) analysis, aligned to our operational groups. This information, combined with our risk and demand data, and an organisational review, ensures the delivery of a comprehensive and robust SAR. Our SAR plays a critical role in guiding decision making and planning and serves as a foundation in the shaping of our Community Safety Plan (CSP).

The most recent SAR is published on our website and covers 2023-25. Prior to its publication the documents went through a consultation process with our key partners. During 2023-24 the Service has been using this SAR to support the development of our new CSP, along with other key documents, these include a comprehensive Fire Cover Review undertaken in 2023-24, our Cultural Action Plan and the Medium Term Finance Plan. The draft CSP 2024-28 will be presented to the Authority at its February meeting and, subject to approval, will be out on a 12-week public consultation. In crafting the new CSP, the Service is committed to maintaining alignment with the Fire Standards Board's Community Risk Management Plan standard and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) requirements.

The delivery of the CSP is monitored and reviewed through our performance management system and management arrangements.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

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

The Service has further developed the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure which supports a modern, business led approach that continues to provide a joined-up approach across operations, governance, security and data. The Service continue to invest in key initiatives for improved sustainability and value for money to support front line services with

the most modern technology available. ICT capital and revenue programmes are continually reviewed against the ICT Strategy and procurement scheduling adapted to meet the changing needs of the Service.

The Digital Transformation Programme is progressing well, with a focus on procuring a new Human Resources management information system, alongside migrating information and systems held within IBM Lotus Notes into Microsoft 365. This will ensure the Service maximises its efficiency and has a sustainable position for software management.

The procurement of an ICT management system is also underway, and work has been completed to define our requirements for a sustainable back up mapping and storage solution. This procurement is planned for quarter 1 2024-25. The internal ICT disaster recovery processes is under review and third-party support is being reviewed in the event of a cyber-attack or natural causes ICT issue, to assure alignment to business need. The Service is in the process of aligning the current multiple services for Firewalls and Wide Area Network into one, to achieve increased value for money that better supports the Service.

The .Gov Wifi has been delivered and the telephony through MS Teams has also been delivered to all laptop users. Work is underway to identify other opportunities for improved call management through this tool.

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

Financial management and governance remain strong, and the Service is consistently rated highly in audit and inspection processes.

With inflation still stubbornly high and general economic pressures not showing signs of abating, the Service remains concerned about the medium to longer-term impact on the Authority's financial position. As well as additional cost increases, it is possible to foresee that there will be further funding pressures on the Service moving towards a General Election and new Parliament, with the Government needing to reduce the national debt and balance overall public spending.

The Service continues to engage with all relevant stakeholders to influence the debate on financial sustainability for fire and rescue services and, in particular, to maintain increased council tax flexibility. The Chief Fire Officer is influencing the national debate through his role as Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council's Finance Committee. This included detailed discussion around planning for the 2024-25 Local Government Finance Settlement and positioning the sector in readiness for the next

Comprehensive Spending Review. Along with other fire and rescue services, the Service continues to write to the Local Government Minister and Chief Secretary to the Treasury setting out our case.

The Service has managed to set a balanced budget for 2024-25, despite additional precept flexibility not being granted. The Service is increasingly reliant on grant income over which there is no certainty or guarantee for future financial years, so will need to develop plans to reduce levels of spend to avoid a growing financial deficit over the medium term. Taking account of the operational pay awards for 2022 and 2023 that were agreed after the 2023-24 budget as set, and the 2023 pay award made to corporate staff, the latest Medium Term Finance Plan deficit forecasts are £2m for 2025-26, rising to £3.1m for 2027-28 (Fire Authority Budget Setting paper, 8 February 2024).

KLOE 7 sub-diagnostic

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

For some time now, the Service have been engaging with local Members of Parliament (MPs), the Home Office and National Fire Chiefs Council to influence the debate on financial sustainability for fire and rescue services and, in particular, lobby for council tax flexibility. This has included briefing sessions for local MPs and letters from the Chair and Chief Fire Officer to relevant government ministers. In October, the Service again wrote to the Local Government Minister and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury putting our case forward for continued council tax flexibility. This flexibility was not granted for 2024-25 so the Service will need to look for further savings to ensure that it remains in a sustainable financial position.

The audited financial statements for 2021-22 were signed off by the Finance & Audit Committee in December 2022. Our auditors, Deloitte LLP, provided an 'Unmodified' opinion on the Statements and updated the Committee in March 2023 with the outcome of the Value for Money work. This also showed an 'Unmodified' opinion. Unfortunately, the Service are still waiting for formal sign-off of the Statements, which has been delayed due to auditing of pensions information. Deloitte LLP are making good progress with their audit of the 2022-23 financial statements, and preliminary work with our new Auditors, Bishop Fleming, has commenced for 2023-24.

South West Audit Partnership completed their scheduled internal audits for 2022-23 with the two financial reviews gaining a 'Substantial' assurance opinion. For 2023-24 they reviewed payroll and pensions procedures in quarter 3 and fuel cards and procurement cards in quarter 4.

KLOE 7 sub-diagnostic

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

Members approve the Service budget and Medium Term Finance Plan annually each February. The 2024-25 settlement from Central Government did not provide further £5 council tax flexibility but did provide additional grant income which enabled a balanced budget to be presented and approved by Members for 2024-25. The future provision of grant income has not been confirmed beyond 2024-25 by Government and the Service will need to develop plans to reduce spending. These decisions are guided by the work of the Resources and Savings Programme which has a schedule of work which includes regular reviews of our financial assumptions and options for making further savings and efficiencies.

KLOE 7 sub-diagnostic

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

The Service continually monitors its plans for reserves usage to ensure sufficient levels are maintained to support financial sustainability. The reserves plan and general balances risk assessment are approved annually by Members at the Authority each February for the approaching financial year. Levels of reserves and general balances are then reviewed and published as part of the annual Statements of Accounts process. The Finance & Audit Committee are updated quarterly on the current reserves position as part of the wider financial position update. The usage of reserves is subject to a stringent process aligned to key priorities and supporting strategic projects.

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. There are no strategic issues to raise with Members. The work-related absence due to physical injuries or ill health quarterly is up from 118 to 289 days over the same time last year. In this quarter, 11 people are contributing to these figures. Of the 11 people, five are designated long term sick or in long term recovery and their days lost account for 72% of the total for quarter. The number of reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 has increased over the same quarter last year by one from two to five.

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, continues to monitor the robust arrangements in place. Health and Safety arrangements continue to operate well, with no causes for concern to raise with Members. Our trend analysis within the report is based on the same time as last year to allow for seasonal influences.

- The work-related absence due to physical injuries or ill health quarterly trend is up from 118 up to 289 days compared to the same time last year. In this quarter, 11 people are contributing to these figures. Of these 11 people, five are designated long term sick or in long term recovery and their days lost account for 72% of the total for quarter.
- Vehicle accidents have increased from 28 to 40 compared to the same time last year. These tend to be slow vehicle accidents. All are reviewed by the Service Driving Standards Group on a quarterly basis to identify trends and monitor where additional driver training or management action may be required.
- The number of reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) has increased over the same quarter last year from two to five. These regulations require employers, the self-employed and those in control of premises to report specified workplace incidents.

The Service has some good levels of compliance in relation to Health and Safety and this is upheld by the Service being accredited to ISO45001 Occupational Health and Safety Management system standard. The next audit by British Standards Institute auditors will be in May 2024.

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. Both have been audited through a peer review and internal audit mechanisms with good levels of assurance being awarded. The Service has aligned its governance, from performance through to assurance, to the Key Lines of Enquiry from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The Authority has provided approval for an application to be made to join the South West Audit Partnership, the relevant paperwork is currently being finalised with the Authority's legal team.

The Statement of Assurance for 2022-23 was prepared, along with its supporting information, for the Authority meeting in September 2023. During this meeting Members approved the document and this has subsequently been published on the Service's website.

Members can be assured that the Service is proactively managing its information and security compliance requirements. There are strategic and tactical processes that broadly align to the principles of British Standards Institute 27001. Cyber security arrangements are operating well and monitored on a continual basis. Annual Information and Communication Technology testing is conducted externally giving additional assurance of the robust arrangements in place. Due to the continued proactive work in this area, risks are reducing, and any remedial action prioritised and regularly monitored. This includes work to enable re-accreditation of cyber essentials with suppliers to ensure multi factor authentication is in place on third party systems. An assessment of the Cyber Assessment Framework led by the Home Office also demonstrates the Service is in a positive position for its cyber security arrangements.

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. These took place to consider quarter 2 performance in November. Priorities four and five were reviewed at the Finance & Audit Committee at their meeting in December for quarter 2 performance.

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. This is further supported 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 rating from internal audit and was commended by the Local Government Association peer review team led by the Chair of the Authority. The internal audit annual report from South West Audit Partnership awarded the Service an overall grade of 'substantial assurance' following delivery of the 2021-22 audit programme.

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 reviewed CSP will be brought to Members in February 2024 for approval to undertake a full public consultation exercise. A presentation of overall performance against each priority is provided to the Authority at six and 12-month intervals.

KLOE 13 sub-diagnostic

How effective and efficient are our governance arrangements?

The annual internal audit report, provided by our internal auditors the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP), awarded the Service with an overall grade of 'substantial assurance' following the completion of the 2022-23 audit programme. The delivery of the 2023-24 audit programme is on schedule, with the final two audits being undertaken in quarter 4. In December 2023, the

Authority's application to join the SWAP was approved by their Board. Therefore, in preparation for the Finance & Audit Committee meeting in March 2024, SWAP have been developing their four-year audit strategy and annual plan for 2024-25 for Member approval. This strategy and plan have been collaboratively developed by: SWAP, the Service, and the Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee.

The Service continues to have comprehensive assurance arrangements in place, to ensure the maintenance of good performance levels across the Service. This includes internal audits, external audit, British Standards Institute audits (for ISO45001 and ISO55001), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspections and peer reviews. These, in conjunction with our internal assurance mechanisms, contribute to the development of the annual Statement of Assurance. The Authority approved the 2022-23 Statement of Assurance at their meeting in September 2023, which provided assurance in line with the inspectorate's methodology. The Statement of Assurance and supporting information for 2022-23 is published on the Service's website.

The Authority and Service took deliberate steps in 2019, to ensure alignment with HMICFRS methodology, from policy development to operational implementation. This alignment is substantiated by our Key Lines of Enquiry, which adhere to the inspectorate's judgment criteria and their 'good' rating standards. To sustain this alignment, a review against the 'good' criteria is conducted annually, along with quarterly performance reports to provide ongoing evidence supporting the Service's pursuit of a 'good' rating. This approach has undergone audit scrutiny by our internal auditors, who granted a 'substantial' assurance rating.

Performance management arrangements are well-established across the Service and up to Authority level, with clear reporting requirements and oversight. This robust system connects performance reporting from the Community Safety Plan and the Authority's five priorities down to team and watch levels. These reports are gathered and presented through our performance management tool and comprehensive suite of station-level performance dashboards.

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 and security compliance requirements. There are strategic and tactical processes that broadly align to the principles of British Standards Institute 27001 and are detailed in the supporting documentation associated with the Statement of Assurance, which was approved by Members in September 2023.

There were 34 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests due for response in quarter 3, all of which were responded to within 20 working days. The average response time was nine days, the same as last quarter. There has been a 57% reduction from last quarter in the number of FOI requests, due to the spike from requests associated with the Home Office's Bibby Stockholm barge in quarter 2. Two requests for internal review were received in relation to our decision on disclosure. The decision for both responses was upheld.

Five subject access requests were received in quarter 3 with two complex subject access requests responded to from the previous quarter.

In quarter 3, eight complaints were received, four of which related to our response to incidents. Of those due to be responded to, 87.5% were resolved within 14 days (or within the date agreed with the complainant). Of these complaints, 87.5% (seven) were not upheld, one is yet to have a resolution, and none needed referring to senior management.

Pleasingly, there were 24 compliments this quarter, 14 related to our response to an incident.

There were five information management security incidents reported this quarter. The Service continues to monitor progress against our cyber action plan and is focused on work to ensure third party cloud services have multi factor authentication in place. The Service has completed a gap analysis against the National Fire Chiefs Council's Cyber Assessment Framework at the request of the Home Office. Our submission was returned in October confirming that the Service has fully achieved 33 of the 39 controls, with six being partially achieved which will be ported to our Cyber Action plan.

A mitigation plan from the annual Information and Communication Technology health check conducted in June is being monitored to ensure all high and medium risks are prioritised.

All staff are expected to complete Information Security/Data Protection e-learning to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities regarding data. The Service monitors the completion rate of this e-learning, and as of 31 December 2023, 88% of all employees had completed their mandatory data protection and cyber security training.

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

In quarter 3, long-term sickness was the largest contributing factor to the absence figures across all staff groups except Fire Control. Musculoskeletal was the highest causation of absence for operational staff (wholetime and on-call) this quarter. Mental health absence was the highest causation for corporate staff this quarter and respiratory absence was the highest causation for fire control.

The Service has a corporate target to achieve average sickness levels lower than the previous five-year average. The cumulative target (wholetime/corporate/fire control) for quarter 3 was 6.9 shifts lost per person, but this was exceeded with a cumulative actual figure of 7.4 shifts lost person, therefore the target for this quarter was not met.

In quarter 3, 92% of staff passed their fitness test and five new fitness improvement plans were put in place for staff which includes the provision of advice and guidance on fitness improvement, including weight management and nutritional information. As a result, a total of 17 fitness improvement plans are now in place.

Sickness absence is professionally managed through our dedicated health and wellbeing team who work closely with line managers and Human Resources Business Partners. Sickness procedures are robust and a range of support mechanisms such as counselling and physiotherapy are in place to support staff including, through a cost benefit analysis, funding for private investigations if it is considered that National Health Service (NHS) waiting times are delaying treatment and/or recovery. NHS waiting times remain an area of concern and some members of staff have had planned operations cancelled, which will impact on absence levels. As a result, the Service has surveyed staff on whether they wish to pay for personal private healthcare through a salary deduction arrangement. The Service has received a good response to this and are in discussion with a healthcare provider.

During quarter 3 the national Firefit conference was held and a number of key health messages, such as back care, diabetes and heart health, cancer support, menopause, the firefighter charity crisis line were publicised. The Service continues to promote and participate in free preventative Wellness Workshops provided by the Firefighters Charity. The Service also encourage staff to have their winter flu jabs and thus far 48 staff have received reimbursement.

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. A range of health and wellbeing procedures are in place which outline all the support mechanisms available to all staff including mental health support, peer support and other external self-service provisions.

Absence management continues to be a key focus with robust monitoring arrangements in place. Long-term absence was the largest contributing factor to the absence figures in quarter 3 across all staff groups except Fire Control and Musculoskeletal was the highest causation of absence for operational staff (wholetime & on-call) this quarter. Mental health absence was the highest causation for corporate staff this and respiratory absence was the highest causation for Fire Control this quarter.

The Service has a corporate target to achieve average sickness levels lower than the previous five-year average. The cumulative target for quarter 3 was 6.9 shifts lost per person (wholetime/corporate/fire control), but this was exceeded with a cumulative actual figure of 7.4 shifts lost person, therefore the target for this quarter was not met. This means the longer-term trend analysis shows average sickness levels are still increasing. There has however been a positive improvement on Fire Control sickness levels with shifts lost having significantly decreased from 4.62 last year to 1.52 this quarter.

In quarter 3, 92% of staff passed their fitness test and five new fitness improvement plans were put in place for staff which includes the provision of advice and guidance on fitness improvement, including weight management and nutritional information. As a result, a total of 17 fitness improvement plans are now in place.

Sickness absence is professionally managed through our dedicated health and wellbeing team who work closely with line managers and Human Resources Business Partners. Sickness procedures are robust and a range of support mechanisms such as counselling and physiotherapy are in place. National Health Service (NHS) waiting times remain an area of concern with some operations being cancelled this quarter impacting on sickness levels. The Service does consider, through a cost benefit analysis, funding for private investigations if it is considered that NHS waiting times are delaying treatment and/or recovery. During quarter 3 the Service sought the appetite of staff interest in paying for private health care through salary deduction. This would also extend to employees being able to pay for their family members. A good level of response and this is now progressing.

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

During quarter 3 the national Firefit conference was held and a number of key health messages, such as back care, diabetes and heart health, cancer support, menopause, the firefighter charity crisis line were publicised. The Service continues to promote and participate in free preventative Wellness Workshops provided by the Firefighters Charity. The Service also encourage staff to have their winter flu jabs and thus far 48 staff have received reimbursement.

KLOE 9: How well trained and skilled are staff?

KLOE 9 Summary

The Service continues to conduct training delivery in accordance with the Annual Training Action Plan and on-call quarterly training programme. Our training delivery is supported by additional e-learning modules and virtual delivery. Our competence recording system, which covers all staff, developed with a private sector partner, has been successfully embedded with competence levels monitored by Officers.

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 continued in standard delivery format in quarter 3. Training delivery continues to be supplemented by additional E-learning and virtual course delivery.

Our competence recording system, which covers all staff, developed with a private sector partner, has been successfully embedded. Officers monitor competence levels 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 and the needs of the station.

A restructure of the Learning and Organisation Development Team has been completed, some of the focus of this team is to revise our Leadership Development Programmes as well as other actions detailed within the culture action plan.

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. They include a range of channels and methods to ensure the involvement of all parts of our workforce. Communications plans are a standard element of the project management process to ensure that stakeholders engage in Service projects.

Robust workforce and succession planning arrangements are in place that support each stage of the employment cycle. Heads of Department complete an annual department succession plan and a five-year retirement profile is monitored regularly to aid wholetime recruitment decision making.

The Service continues to use social media as a key part of our positive action work. Community profile information is available to crews, so that the Service can target our 'Have a Go' recruitment and social media campaigns. This information also enables the Service to better support and strengthen our community engagement activities.

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 23.3% against a target of 21.9%.

Equality data of all starters and leavers is captured to monitor trends and of the 28 new starters in quarter 3, 21 were commencing employment as on-call firefighters; three of whom were female.

There were 51 leavers in quarter 3, 12 females and 39 males. The primary reason for leaving for all staff was due to retirement (15 members of staff). Of the 51 leavers this quarter, 43 were offered leavers discussions (84%). Analysis of the responses to exit interview questions has identified no particular trends in terms of sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin or religion and belief. The new leavers process came into force during quarter 3 but unfortunately all the non-completed exit interviews fell in the

period when the new process was in place. A review of the process will be undertaken to ensure the new process is robustly implemented.

There were three new disciplinary cases and one appeal in quarter 3, resulting in a total of 13 performance management cases in progress. There were five cases concluded in quarter 3; one resulted in dismissal, two concluded with local management action and two appeals were not upheld. Post case reviews are held for all closed cases with the aim of them taking place within four weeks of the case concluding. Post case reviews enable lessons learnt, potential procedural changes and organisational learning and improvements to be captured. As part of our approach to strengthen our case management arrangements additional resources will be in place from quarter 4. One new employment tribunal claim was submitted this quarter, resulting in two employment tribunal claims in progress.

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 which was a focus for the latest inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

In quarter 3, feedback from our middle manager leaderships forum focused on the delivery of the recommendations from the Independent Culture review to feed into the development of our Culture action plan. Managers have been engaging with their teams during December 2023 and into quarter 4 to be able to feed into our annual Managers Engagement days which will focus on Culture. The thematic review from HMICFRS conducted in December 2023 has also encouraged staff to provide their views on the Service through independent focus groups.

The Service continues to engage with representative bodies on a regular and structured basis through liaison meetings attended by senior managers. This enables effective and timely two-way dialogue between the Service and staff representatives. Good local relationships are being maintained and this has been evidenced with our approach to strengthening our organisational culture.

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 ensure there are no unintentional barriers to recruitment. A wide range of initiatives are in place to support our work to increase the diversity of our workforce. The Service continues to use social media as a key part of our positive action work. Community profile information is available to crews, so that the Service can target our 'Have a Go' recruitment and social media campaigns. This information also enables the Service to better support and strengthen community engagement activities.

The Service's promotions processes have been designed to promote fair promotion opportunities for all. The new process is embedded and the number of people entering the promotion process continues to increase.

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 23.5% against a target of 21.9%.

Equality data of all starters and leavers is captured to monitor trends and of the 51 new starters in quarter 3, 21 were commencing employment as on-call firefighters; three of whom were female.

There were 51 leavers in quarter 3, 12 females and 39 males. The primary reason for leaving for all staff was due to retirement. Of the 51 leavers this quarter, 43 were offered leavers discussions (84%). Analysis of the responses to exit interview questions has identified no particular trends in terms of sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin or religion and belief. The new leavers process came into force during quarter 3 but unfortunately all the non-completed exit interviews fell in the period when the new process was in place. A review of the process will be undertaken to ensure the new process is robustly implemented.

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

KLOE 11 Summary

All joiners are invited to a corporate induction with one corporate induction taking place in quarter 3. The one-to-one personal review process is embedded with completion monitored to ensure that all staff have at least one personal review during a 12-month period.

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 and cover a range of cultural and leadership topics aligned to our Strategic Assessment of Risk. Corporate staff are also encouraged to complete development pathway activities relevant to their role.

Supervisory managers undertake their initial incident command training using the facilities at the Fire Service College, which 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. This is being further enhanced to standardise monthly tactical decision making exercises.

The Service's apprenticeships cover a wide range of areas including Operational Firefighter, Emergency Contact Handle (Control Firefighters), Leadership Development, Finance, Human Resources and Facilities Management. In quarter 3, 33 members of staff are undertaking apprenticeships which represents 2.05% of staff.

The Service's coaching procedure also supports staff in their development. The Service have several coaches qualified at the Institute of Leadership & Management level 3 and level 5. The Learning Hub provides a one-stop blended learning resource and is widely used by staff.

The Learning & Organisational Development team restructure has enabled a reappropriation of staff responsibilities. The Service have several coaches qualified at the Institute of Leadership & Management level 3 and level 5 and the Service is looking at how to reinvigorate coaching and mentoring arrangements alongside the revision of leadership development programmes. The Service's Learning and Organisational Development team are also actively involved in the development and delivery of our culture action plan.

KLOE 11 sub-diagnostic

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

One corporate induction was held in quarter 3 which had 18 attendees. Where individuals are not able or fail to attend the corporate induction within the agreed timescales, this is escalated to the line manager to ensure attendance.

Following the corporate induction, a survey regarding the effectiveness of the process is sent out. All respondents across both sessions confirmed the induction met or exceeded their expectations. Respondents were positive about the informative and engaging content, the informal nature of the session, the opportunity for corporate and operational staff to come together and the quality of the presentations. Following feedback from the previous quarter, attendees were invited to change tables partway through the session to meet more people and this change received positive feedback.

Another way that the Service evaluates how successful the induction period has been for a new starter is data from probation reviews. Year to date, since 1 April 2023, 60 probations have been met, two has been extended, and no staff contracts have been terminated during their probation period. There are 12 final probation reviews outstanding at the end of the quarter.

The one-to-one personal review process ensures that a discussion and appraisal take place at least once a year and focuses on wellbeing, performance and development. One-to-one reviews are recorded over a rolling 12-month period and completion rates are monitored. Trend analysis suggests that reviews tended to be conducted quite evenly over the 12-month period.

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. The Service's Leadership Development Programme ensures leaders at each level in the organisation are equipped with the skills to successfully conduct their role. Middle and strategic managers attend our Leaders' Forum which consists of two hour 'bitesize' workshops on a bi-monthly basis and cover a range of cultural and leadership topics aligned to our Strategic Assessment of Risk. Corporate staff are also encouraged to complete development pathway activities relevant to their role.

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The Service's apprenticeships cover a wide range of areas including Leadership Development, Finance, Human Resources and Facilities Management. Figures for quarter 3 show that 33 Service personnel are undertaking apprenticeships which represents 2.05% of staff.

The Learning & Organisational Development team restructure has enabled a reappropriation of staff responsibilities. The Service have several coaches qualified at the Institute of Leadership & Management level 3 and level 5 and the Service is looking at how to reinvigorate our coaching and mentoring arrangements alongside the revision of our leadership development programmes. The Service's Learning & Organisational Development team are also actively involved in the development and delivery of our culture action plan. The Services Learning Hub provides a one-stop blended learning resource and is widely used by staff.