



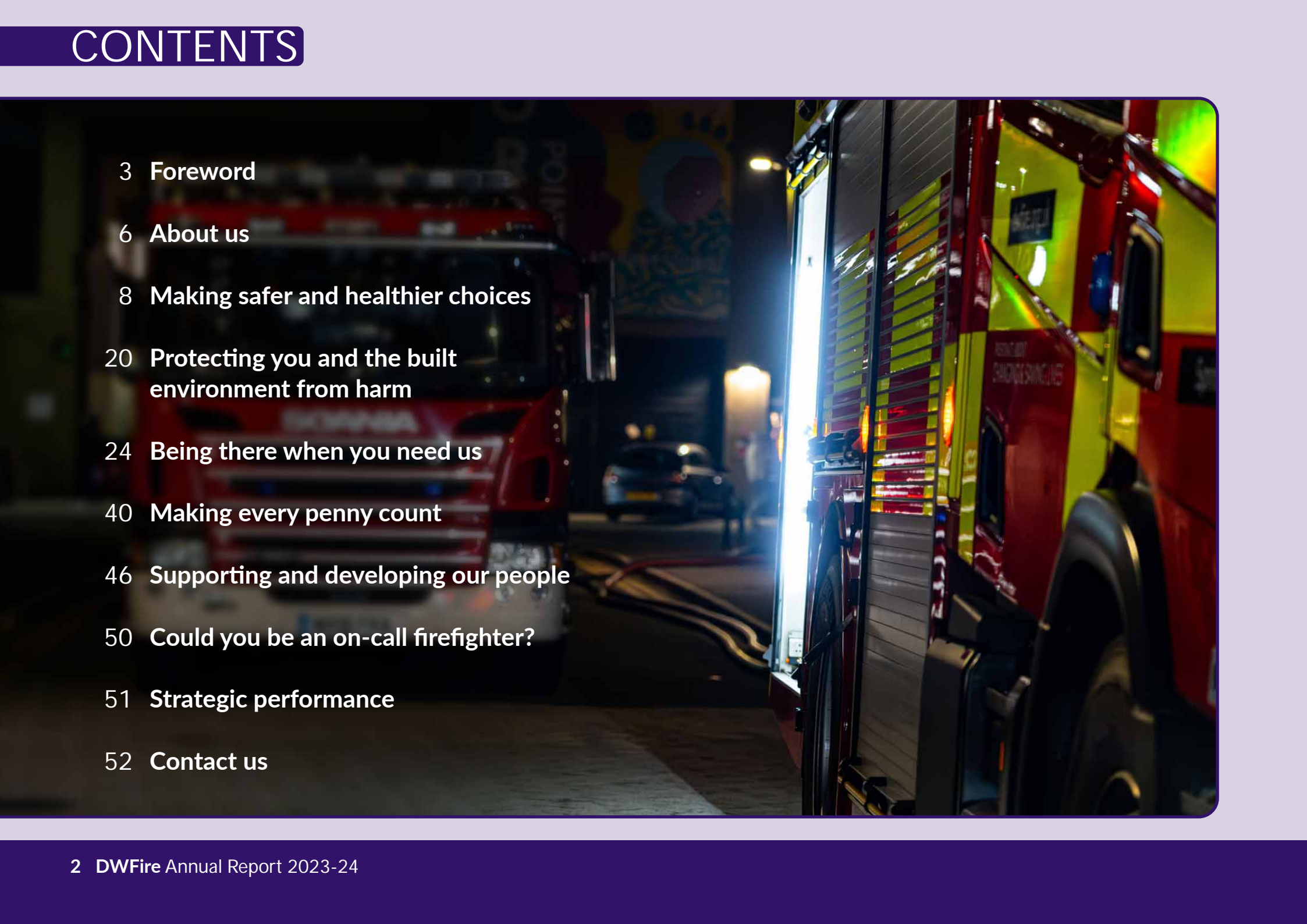
DORSET & WILTSHIRE  
FIRE AND RESCUE

# Annual Report 2023-24





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Cllr Paul Oatway QPM  
Chair of the Fire and  
Rescue Authority



Ben Ansell QFSM  
Chief Fire Officer

During the last year, our Service has continued to be very busy and faced many challenges. We have seen first-hand the pressures we are all facing and responding to, including climate change, the cost of living crisis, and the increased demand on the public sector. Fire Control received 32,440 calls during 2023-24 and we attended 14,605 operational incidents. This included rescuing 125 people from fires and 446 people from road traffic collisions.

Although you may think of us mainly responding to emergency incidents, we carry out a lot of work with partners and communities focused on preventing fires and other emergency situations from occurring. Safe & Well visits are a large part of our prevention work, and last year we carried out 7,730 visits to vulnerable people.

We reduce the risk of fire and other emergencies by installing smoke alarms and other safety devices. We also continue to educate members of our communities in road safety, engaging with target groups that are most at risk, helping them make safer choices.

Our fire safety department have had another busy year, implementing recent changes to fire safety legislation. The team continues to meet the demands of the new legislation, helping to reach our business communities. Over the last year we engaged with hundreds of local businesses and carried out 920 fire safety audits, 484 licensing consultations, as well as responding to 1,645 consultations from building control. We carried out investigations into possible fire safety offences, and last year we served 29 enforcement notices, and 36 prohibition notices.

# FOREWORD

In addition to this, crews have completed 800 fire safety checks in local businesses, supporting them to comply with the legislation.

In October 2023 we published our Independent Review into the Workplace Culture of our Service. In welcoming the report, we, as the Chair of the Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer, expressed gratitude to all members of staff who came forward to speak to the Review Team. Our Culture Action Plan is driving positive culture change, with strong governance and oversight arrangements in place through the Fire and Rescue Authority Finance and Audit Committee.

The Independent Review recognised that whilst our Service have got a lot of good support mechanisms in place, it had not always got things right. In accepting the report, and all the recommendations, we apologised to staff who had experienced inappropriate behaviour and confirmed our commitment to leading culture change throughout the organisation.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) were welcomed into our Service for a thematic review into misconduct during three weeks in December 2023. Whilst all services were asked to take part in a survey, we were one of ten fire and rescue services selected to help HMICFRS gain a deeper understanding of how cases of misconduct are managed across England. The final report was published on 1 August 2024.

This Annual Report provides you with an overview of our performance and the work that we have undertaken in the last year. We hope it provides assurance that your fire service is working hard to keep you safe and respond when necessary, whilst providing good value for money. If you want to find out more, including about our Community Safety Plan, please visit our website where contact information is also available.



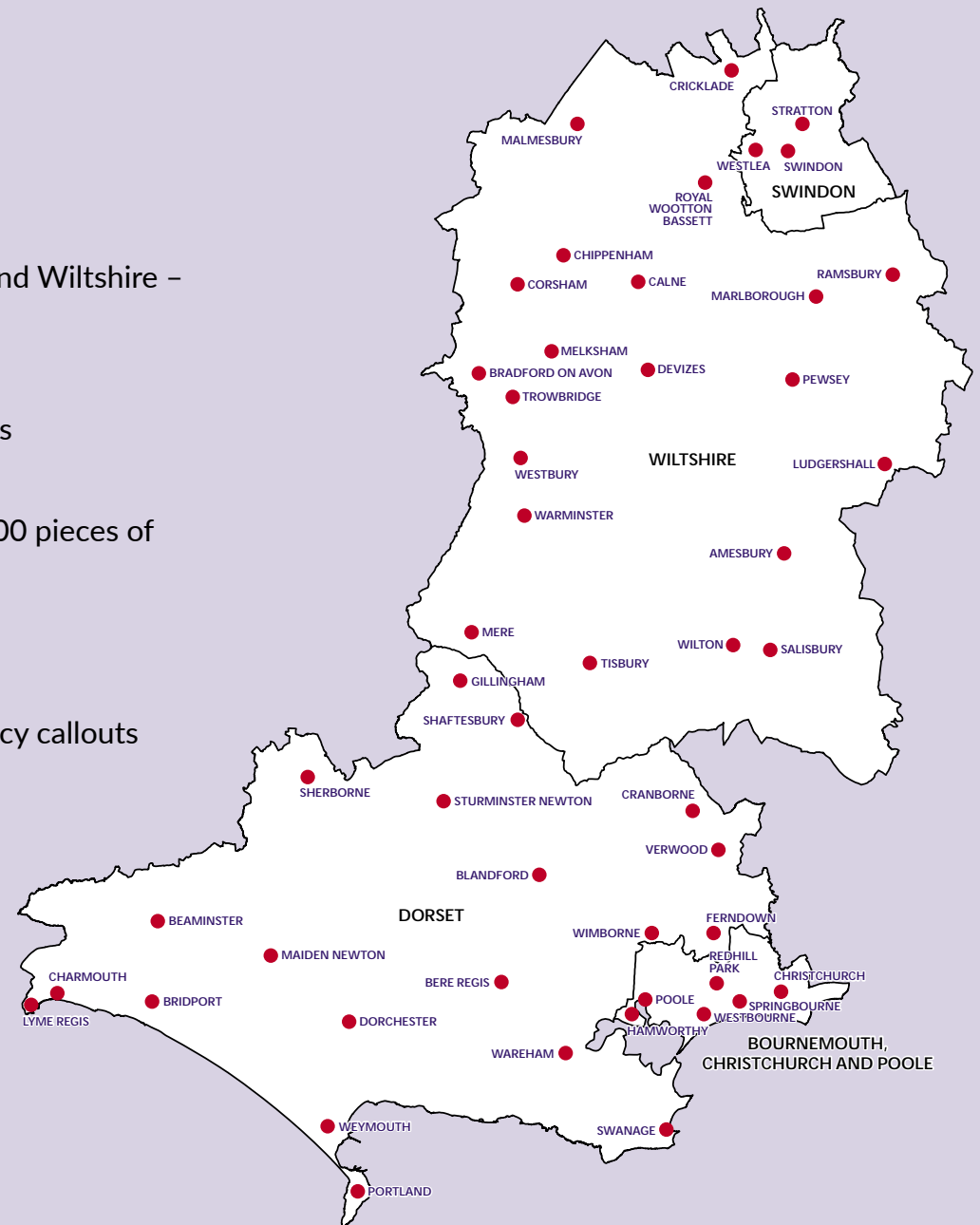


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# ABOUT US

## Your fire and rescue service

- Serves around 1.5 million people
- Covers Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, Dorset, Swindon and Wiltshire – an area of around 2,500 square miles
- Operates from 50 fire stations and a number of other key buildings
- Uses fire engines, a number of specialist vehicles and almost 70,000 pieces of equipment, and
- Delivers these services through a fantastic team of:
  - on-call firefighters, who make themselves available for emergency callouts
  - wholetime firefighters, including fire control operators based in our control room who answer 999 emergency calls, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year
  - vehicle, equipment and information and communication technology technicians who provide a 24/7 service
  - corporate staff who help to support our essential front-line services, and
  - volunteers who help us across our Service.



## Our priorities



### Prevention:

#### Making safer and healthier choices

Educating people to the dangers around them and preventing risky behaviour.



### Protection:

#### Protecting you and the built environment from harm

Our legal obligation to keep buildings and businesses safe for people to use.



### Response:

#### Being there when you need us

Our emergency service responds quickly to people who are in danger or distress.



### Governance:

#### Making every penny count

It is important we are well managed and that we spend our budget wisely and maximise what we do with it.



### People:

#### Supporting and developing our people

Making sure our people are at the centre of everything we do and have the right knowledge, skills and behaviour; which is crucial to the success of our Service.

## About this Annual Report

The role of the fire service is constantly changing, and our role in your community is now more varied than ever. Emergency response is only a part of what we do. To help us focus our resources in the best way possible we have five priorities. These are aimed at improving the safety and quality of life for everyone who lives in, or visits, the counties of Dorset and Wiltshire. This Annual Report gives you an overview of our performance over the past year against each of our five key priorities.



28,710

children received  
safety messages

## Education

We aim to educate children and young people, to help them make positive choices and reduce crime. This enables them to live happier, healthier and safer lives within our communities.

Our education covers not only fire safety, but many other safety aspects including living independently and reducing slips trips and falls in the home.



Our education team covers:



**fire safety:** children gaining knowledge and understanding of how to make good choices, to keep them safe from fire risks within their home and wider community



**anti-social behaviour:** we promote understanding of the potential consequences of playing with fire and making hoax calls. We provide children with the skills to help them make informed and positive behavioural choices, providing them with useful hints and tips, to get them out of difficult situations



**road safety:** raising awareness with new and soon to be drivers of the hazards both on the road, and within the car. We also teach children how to be sensible car passengers



**water safety:** we teach children how to keep themselves safe in, on, or near water, including sea, inland waterways and flooded areas



As part of our education programmes we promote firefighters as role models. We know how important their role is within society and how their reputation can inspire others. We use our firefighters to promote and develop inclusive and positive behaviour to help our children and young people make safer and healthier lifestyle choices.

We target our education based on risk; this includes:



the number of fires that have taken place within a child's home within the school catchment area



our response time from the fire station to the school



socio-economic data



incident trends for the area



We also provide education following incidents and have supported numerous schools this way. We aim to provide the children with reassurance, following what can be a traumatic event. For example, we recently worked with the community in Cheselbourne following an incident. We were able to provide education in the local school and support through an assembly. This enabled children to focus on being fire safe, how to create an escape plan, how to call 999 and of course our key messages around the importance of smoke detection within the home. The local fire crew joined the visit and helped reassure the children that our firefighters are there to help keep them safe.

To ensure we support our whole community, we offer our educational input to children through other settings, such as Pupil Referral Units, Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools and children with SEN, along with those who are home educated.

Children's groups, such as Guides and Scouts, also visit our fire stations and they are provided with education and fun activities to help them improve their knowledge and understanding of fire.

We recognise children can make a great impact on safety in their homes, ensuring positive behaviour changes are made. During 2023-24 our interactive online packages were accessed on 989 occasions following our input.

During the school holidays we engaged with children at libraries, hosting themed story times. These are based around the themes of our annual safety calendar, such as fireworks, Halloween or water safety.

Our education isn't just provided to children, we take the opportunity to engage with parents and carers too. We have received 378 entries into our fun activities and quizzes for this year. This has enabled our prevention messages to be reinforced within the home.



## Fire Safety Intervention

We run a nationally recognised programme for vulnerable children who have shown signs of risky behaviour. This could be through showing an interest in fires and how they start or having started playing with fires

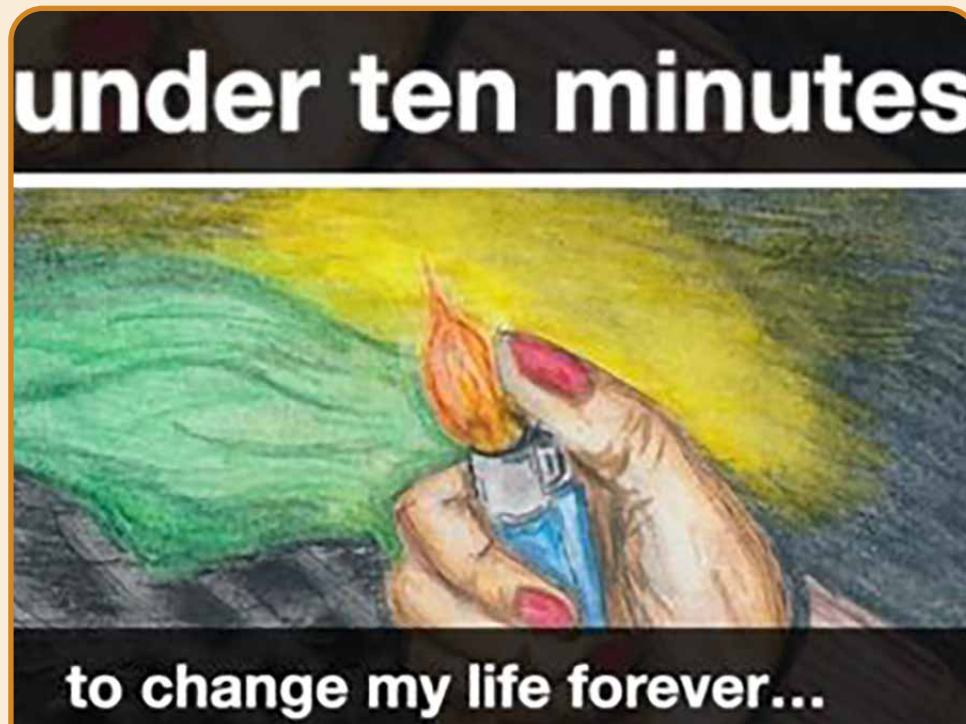


Illustration by a young person who set a fire as a teenager, and then told their story to try and help others avoid risk behaviours

out in the open or in their own homes. We have received 55 referrals from:

-  parents
-  carers
-  teachers
-  children's social services
-  police
-  or other concerned adults

Of the 55 concerns raised with us, 52 were due to fire setting or fire play; the other three referrals were as a result of fear of fire.

Our early intervention helps them understand the consequences of playing with fire, helping them to consider positive behaviour changes instead.



## Impact to wider society

### School Education

The estimated cost of a house fire is **£60,756**. We generate a societal savings figure based on a 1% success rate in preventing a fire. Last year we estimated a societal saving of **£5.4m**.

## Impact to wider society

### Fire Safety Intervention

We generate a societal saving based on a 90% success rate with our programmes. Last year this represented savings of **£573k**. Societal savings are based on the average cost of arson for us, the police, the ambulance service and the wider NHS.

## Community focus:

### Afghan Resettled Families



In collaboration with local authorities and the Ministry Of Defence, we have created educational packages and resources, to support those families who are new to the UK. As part of the government's resettlement programme anyone who has been forced to flee their home, faced threats of persecution, or have supported the UK in Afghanistan, has received support. Our presentations have been translated into their languages to ensure they have a good understanding of the UK's emergency services. We have provided them with the knowledge of how to call for help in an emergency, as well as fire, road, and water safety advice. We have also worked with SGN (previously Scotia Gas Networks) to ensure we have literature for signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.







7,730  
Safe & Well visits

## Home visits

Last year we carried out 7,730 Safe & Well visits in people's homes.

During our visits we provide advice and support to the household, focusing on the fire and safety risks that we see, leaving the household

with information to read for future reference. We link people with other services that may be appropriate, with the consent of the occupier. We also signpost approximately 10% of our visits to other services



## Community focus

During the winter months we give additional support to people living in cold homes. Our winter warmth packs help people keep themselves warm and prevent them using unsafe practices within the home. During the last year we provided 46 packs containing a small blanket, socks, gloves, snood and a hat. We saw a rise in people needing extra support to keep warm, and we held 295 conversations with people about safe practices on how they can help reduce the risk of fire and keep themselves warm. We also created #SaveSafely, a winter campaign on our social media and website with hints and tips on saving money, staying safe and keeping warm at home.



## Impact to wider society

Fire prevention helps build stronger and safer communities. The key focus is the preservation of life and property by reducing the number of fires, preventing injuries, fatalities and the destruction of homes, and businesses. Fires can also have a devastating economic consequence, including property damage, and loss of livelihood.

If only 1% of Safe & Well visits prevent a house fire, that would equal £4.7m in estimated societal savings, and by not attending the 1% of prevented dwelling fires we saved £90k.

for help and support. In addition to the visits completed, when we are unable to arrange a visit we provide information and leaflets. During 2023-24 we have provided this information on 2,729 occasions. We also provide advice and guidance to people on their doorsteps. This support ensures people have appropriate guidance even if they are not comfortable with a home visit. We have carried out 152 visits like this. In total, we have provided home fire safety advice and guidance to 10,611 households this year.

Our partners have referred 7,441 vulnerable people within our communities to us for fire safety

advice and support. Referrals have been received from partner agencies such as South Western Ambulance Service, Police and local hospitals. We also work with utilities companies, such as Thames and Wessex Water, to ensure people who sign up to the Priority Services Registers are signposted to our services.

Last year we were able to access £38,100 worth of funding for carbon monoxide detectors from SGN, and Wales & West Utilities. This enabled us to provide 3,218 detectors to households who did not have sufficient detectors, along with 234 for households where someone had a hearing impairment.



If we identify people in need of additional support we are able to signpost them to the most appropriate services, such as local food banks and smoking cessation support. We have provided 230 Safe and Independent Living referrals to other agencies, where the occupier has consented to additional support.

Where we receive referrals for households at risk of arson our trained advisors provide advice

and support to ensure we help to minimise the risks. During last year we provided equipment to 35 properties to help provide additional protection, but also for reassurance.

Due to the increased risk of fire within smoking households we can provide fire retardant bedding to those at particularly high fire risk. We supplied 126 sets last year. These resources help us to reduce the risk to our community.

## Multi-agency prevention



Our Service supported a multi-agency operation in June to tackle those looking to start fires or carry out antisocial behaviour around Bourne Valley in Poole. Other organisations represented at the day of action included Neighbourhood Policing, and the Drones Team from Dorset Police, BCP Council's Anti-social Behaviour Team, Urban Heath Rangers, and the Urban Heath Partnership.



Above: Greg was a survivor of a severe road traffic collision where the other driver was found guilty of drink driving which unfortunately resulted in two fatalities.

## Road safety

Last year we attended 752 road traffic collisions, where we carried out 446 rescues. We take a partnership approach to road safety, ensuring we work with Dorset Road Safe and the Wiltshire & Swindon Road Safety Partnership. We have generated over £15,000 of funding towards roads safety and a further £7,000 towards supporting Biker Down.

Through our road safety education we provide face to face events, as well as digital resources in schools and colleges. We are privileged to have an array of professional guest speakers supporting our events, such as paramedics, hospital consultants, air ambulance and police staff. Our events are also supported by individuals who have been personally affected by a road traffic collision.



We have held:

47

Safe Drive Stay Alive live events, with 7,097 attendees

35

Safe Drive Stay Alive digital events, with 5,003 attendees

7

Digital assemblies which are optional follow up activities after a live event, with 580 attendees

1

360 Virtual Reality headset event, with 75 attendees, with volunteers from our sponsor

23

MOD Survive the Drive events, with 2,081 attendees

12

Biker Down events, with 235 attendees

We also support community safety events which attract a broad range of members of the public and have attended 19 events with partners. Safety messages and themes for targeting have been highlighted by the local authority Community Safety Partnerships, and have included child car seat checks, older driver forums, and local issues identified by communities.



## Summary

### This work has led to:

- financial savings for us and the wider society
- a reduction in accidental dwelling, and deliberate fires
- the most vulnerable members of our communities, living in their homes for longer
- less hospital admissions for vulnerable people, which reduces demand on public services
- increased awareness for vulnerable road users, helping to reduce the risk of preventable collisions

### Looking ahead, we aim to:

- maximise financial savings from the reduction in fires, and other emergencies
- reach people more at risk, through targeted intervention and education programmes
- develop and strengthen our partnership working, including working with road safety groups to reduce how many people get hurt or seriously injured on our roads

# PROTECTION: Protecting you and the built environment from harm



**920**  
fire safety audits



**484**  
licensing  
applications



**1,645**  
building regulations  
consultations



**6,787**  
positive  
engagements with  
businesses



**800**  
business fire  
safety checks



**29**  
enforcement  
notices issued



**36**  
prohibition  
notices served

## Fire safety

The Building Safety Act 2022 has introduced additional responsibilities on business owners and managers to conduct written fire risk assessments and checks. It also requires greater information sharing under the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 to ensure an improved level of safety is provided for residents of high-rise buildings.

Work associated with the safety assessment of occupied high-rise residential buildings started in April 2024. Our staff are engaged as part of a regional approach to support the Building Safety Regulator with this, in addition to the work associated with planning gateways for new buildings.



We've recruited into our fire safety team following an increase to our Service budget and support from a government grant. This has provided

additional capacity to deliver our inspections, has improved our business support work and enhanced our enforcement and prosecution team.

In the last year we conducted 920 fire safety audits and responded to 1,645 building regulations consultations, as part of our statutory duties. This is

in addition to responding to fire safety concerns from members of the public, partner agencies, licensing consultations, and the provision of guidance on a variety of fire safety related matters. In total there were 6,787 positive engagements with businesses.

Our firefighters have increased the number of business fire safety checks they undertake and continue to provide valuable education to smaller businesses. We carried out 800 of these checks in the last year.





## Fire safety concerns

We continue to respond to fire safety concerns raised by the public and partners. A total of 198 higher priority fire safety concerns were dealt with this year, and 53% of these were responded to within 24 hours.

If anyone has a fire safety concern, we will respond to this according to the level of risk. We will also signpost to other agencies where they may be able to assist.

We continue to provide guidance and education to improve fire safety compliance and understanding. Where necessary, we will use our formal enforcement powers, including prosecution, to ensure public safety is maintained.

If you wish to tell us about fire safety risks in commercial premises, such as locked or blocked fire exits, you have four options:



email the fire safety department at [enforcement@dwfire.org.uk](mailto:enforcement@dwfire.org.uk)



report online at [www.dwfire.org.uk/report-a-fire-safety-concern](http://www.dwfire.org.uk/report-a-fire-safety-concern)



call **01722 691717** during office hours (9am - 5pm Mon-Fri), or



call Fire Control on **03067 990019** out of office hours including weekends.

For more information about business fire safety, including links to relevant guidance, please see our website

[www.dwfire.org.uk/business-fire-safety](http://www.dwfire.org.uk/business-fire-safety).

## Summary

### This work has led to:

- fewer accidents, injuries and deaths
- increased self-compliance in fire safety law, making workplaces and multi-occupied residential premises safer
- a reduction in the impact of unwanted fire alarms, particularly from commercial premises, through tighter procedures, call challenge processes, and providing advisory support

### Looking ahead, we aim to:

- improve our efficiency, and ways of working with the support of partners and other regulators
- develop our delivery in line with the Fire Standards Board and the new National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) competence framework
- strengthen our enforcement and prosecution activity by giving our staff extensive training on evidence gathering
- increase the engagement and education activities carried out by our Business Support Advisors by attending business growth meetings and seminars
- review the Primary Authority Partnerships we have by nominating contact points to provide fire safety advice
- continue collaborating with south west region fire services to enable further consistencies and efficiencies



# 999 RESPONSE: Being there when you need us



**32,440**  
emergency calls  
received



**14,605**  
incidents attended



**2,789**  
fires attended  
(inc. 850 deliberate)

## Emergency response

A telephone call to Fire Control initiates every emergency response. 24 hours a day, 365 days a year; our highly skilled and professional staff

answer calls and mobilise resources to resolve the situation. This year we answered 32,440 emergency calls.



**125**  
rescues from fires



**605**  
accidental fires in  
the home attended

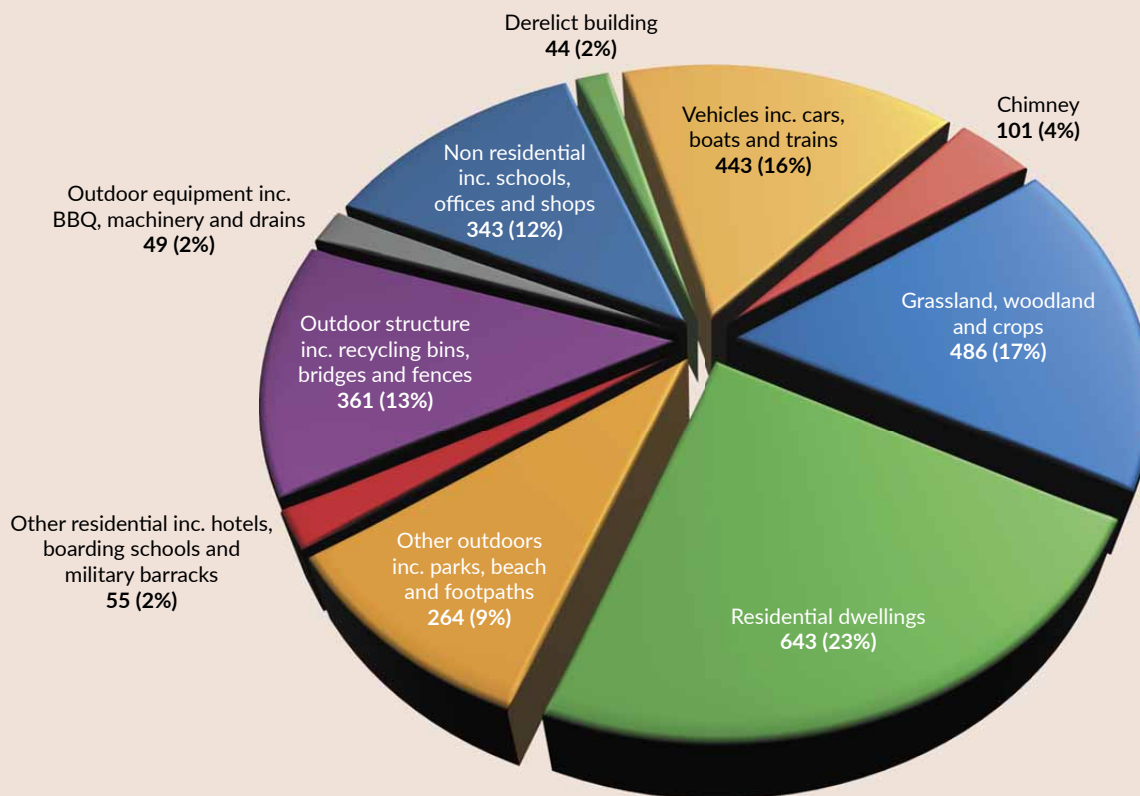


**10.2%**  
reduction in  
accidental dwelling  
fires



**446**  
rescues from road  
traffic collisions

## Types of fire attended 2023-24



We are part of the Networked Fire Services Partnership with Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service and Kent Fire & Rescue Service. We work closely together and use the same technology, so that we can mobilise resources in each other's area during periods of high demand. This helps us save money and provides a good back up for each other.

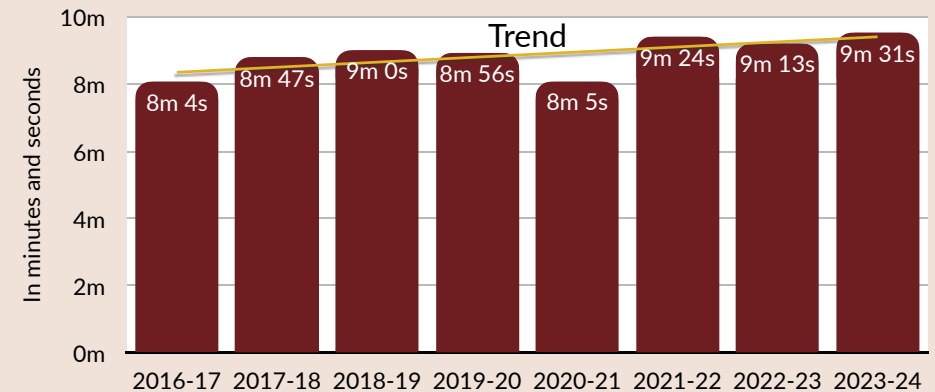
We prioritise our resources to saving lives. Our target is to achieve a ten minute response time for the first fire engine in attendance at confirmed fires in sleeping risks premises, and this includes call handling, turnout and travel time. Last year our average

response time was 9 minutes and 31 seconds.

For all other buildings (not classified as sleeping risk), our target is also a ten minute response time for the arrival of the first fire engine. Last year our average was 11 minutes and 5 seconds.

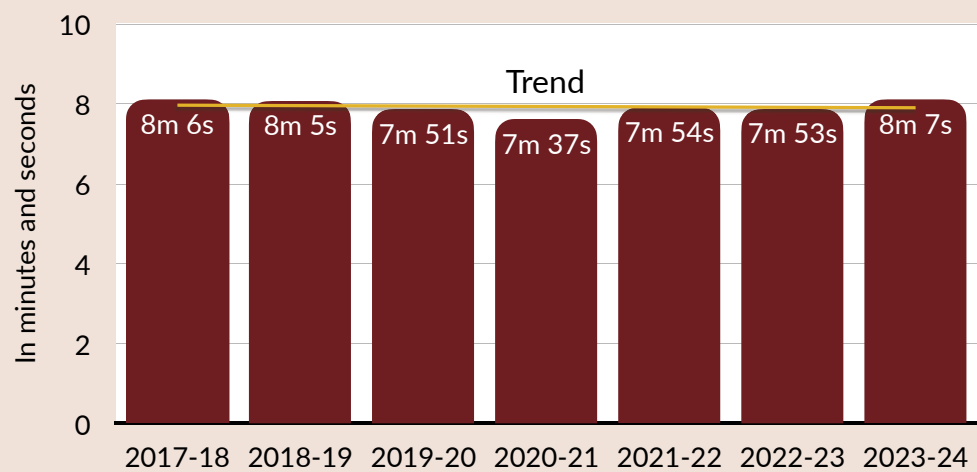
Unfortunately, the incidents we attend do not always have a positive outcome, and people do lose their lives in fire related incidents. His Majesty's Coroner has confirmed two fire related deaths during 2023-24. There were a further four deaths in fire related incidents last year which His Majesty's Coroner has yet to determine the cause.

**Average response time of first fire engine to sleeping risk properties**



Our work with the most vulnerable in our communities aims to significantly reduce the risk of fires occurring in the first place. We achieve this through identifying risks and focusing on fire safety and prevention, especially for those living in rural areas, where response times may be longer.

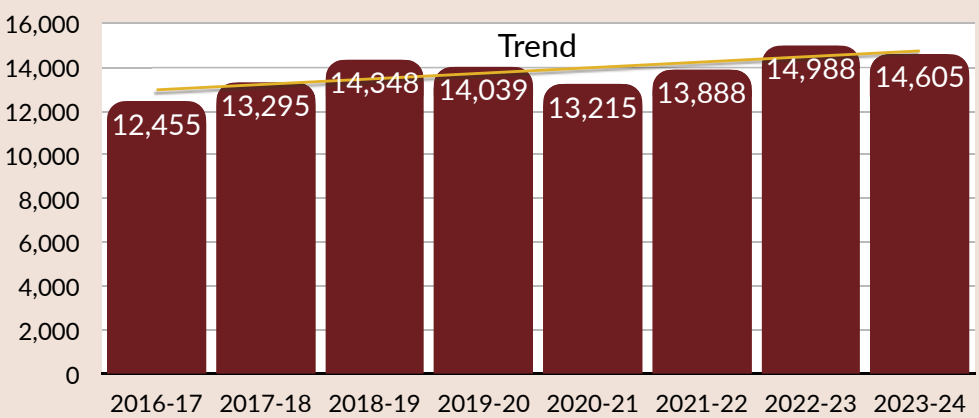
Average response time of first fire engine to sleeping risk properties within our ten minute isochrone\*



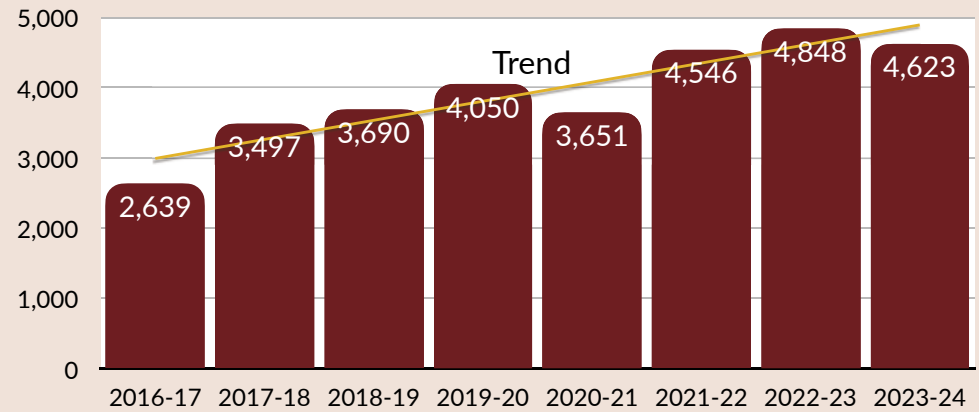
\* An isochrone is the area reached within a ten minute travel time from our fire stations. Factors such as traffic, or poor weather conditions, may affect our ability to achieve a ten minute response time within these areas

### Long term trends

Number of incidents attended

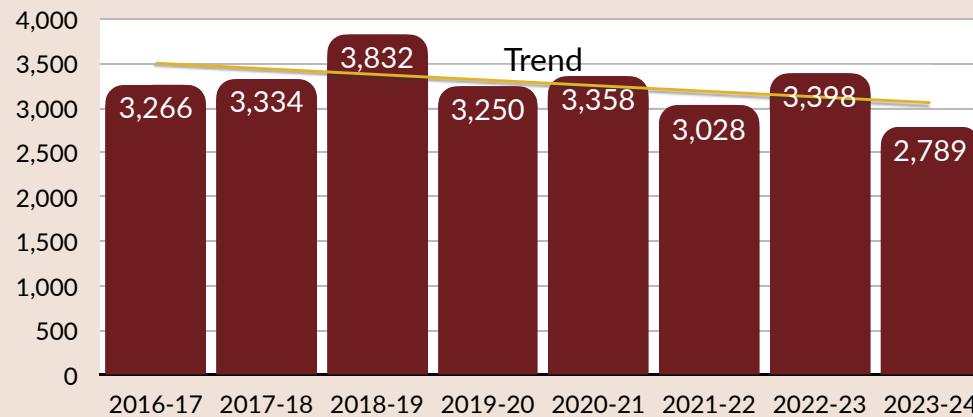


Number of non-fire related incidents



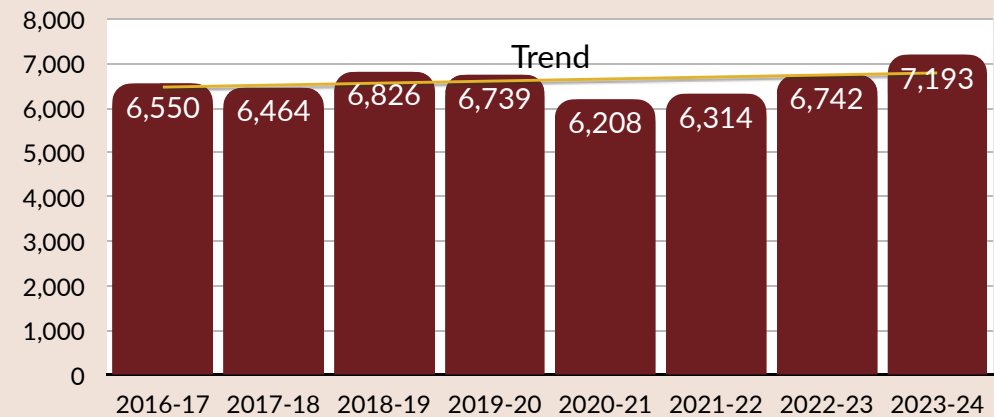


Number of fires attended



We have seen an increase at non fire related incidents this year. These are primarily incidents where we support our partner agencies, which include gaining access to properties, and attending to people who have collapsed behind closed doors. This type of incident is referred to as a special service call.

Number of incidents that turned out to be false alarms



Another priority for us is the reduction of unwanted fire calls, due to faulty alarms or alarms caused by issues such as dust or burnt cooking. Over the last five years we have worked hard on this, which has resulted in the following estimated savings:

Savings in time	£61,712
Cost avoided	£21,150

## Incidents

Firefighting or rescuing people from road traffic collisions are just some types of incident that we attend. Our specialist teams who can respond to all types of incidents, known as our technical rescue teams, are experts in rescuing people from height, water, confined spaces, and incidents requiring animal rescue. At incidents where complicated rescues and extrication are involved, our technical rescue teams are also trained to support our ambulance service colleagues. These teams are supported by a range of specialist vehicles, with additional capabilities, to work at height, manage road traffic collisions involving large vehicles, pump large amounts of water, provide logistical support and to deal with large wildfires.

## Wildfire

Our Service area contains parts of the New Forest National Park, the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Cranborne Chase, the West Wiltshire Downs, Salisbury Plain and the Purbeck Heritage Coast.

Fires in the summer on heathlands can have devastating effects on the wildlife and vegetation; they can take up to 25 years to recover.

May 2023, Poole



When we experience a hot dry summer, the number of heath and grassland fires increase both in terms of numbers and scale. These fires are extremely resource intensive to put out. Last year, we responded to 86 heathland fires.

May 2023, Verwood



We work with the Urban Heaths Partnership, local authorities and land managers on education, signage and media campaigns to prevent fires occurring in the first place, and in the event of a fire, how land managers can assist us. After the fire, if we suspect

July 2023, Studland Heath



the cause to be deliberate, we work with volunteers, wardens and other partners, as well as schools to reduce further fires from happening.





## Thatched Properties

The counties of Dorset and Wiltshire combined have the highest number of thatched properties in the UK.

Statistically homes with thatched roofs are no more likely to catch fire than those with conventional roofs, however if a fire does occur then the impact is likely to be far greater. Thatched property fires are typically attended by in excess of 50 firefighters, at least eight appliances and often for over 24 hours. Last year we attended 12 thatched property fires, compared to 7 in 2022/23 and 13 in 2021/22.

We work with Local Resilience Forums and partners, to prevent and prepare for incidents involving thatched properties, including training and exercising our site specific risk information. Property owners are also provided with educational resources to help prevent incidents occurring.

April 2023, Wimborne



May 2023, Calne



June 2023, Devizes



January 2024, Gillingham



## Severe Weather (including Storms Babet, Ciaran & Henk)

Extreme weather events that bring significant heavy rainfall and/or extreme wind, creates additional demand for our services.

October 2023, Swindon



In October 2023, as with other periods of heavy rain and localised flooding, Fire Control received over 30 emergency calls for flooding in the Swindon and Royal Wootton Bassett areas. Firefighters helped people stuck in their cars as well as those whose homes had let in water.

October 2023, Swindon



Between midnight and 1.45pm on 20 October 2023, when Storm Babet was at its peak, Fire Control dealt with nearly 70 emergency calls related to flooding, again mostly in the Swindon and Royal Wootton Bassett areas. Firefighters made six rescues from vehicles driven through flood water; with approx. 100 vehicles needing to be moved away from flood water.

A crew from Corsham and a technical rescue team from Trowbridge were called to Melksham on 21 October 2023 following reports of a car stranded in floodwater. The driver had self-rescued prior to our arrival but crews remained on scene assisting with traffic management until the arrival of Highways.



On 26 October 2023, Fire Control received a call from a man whose van was stuck in fast flowing flood water at Holnest, near Sherborne. The caller had limited English, so we used Language Line, allowing a third party to join the emergency call, to interpret on behalf of the caller. A crew from Sherborne attended and was assisted by a crew from Yeovil with their inflatable boat allowing them to rescue the man safely.

Storm Henk, in early January 2024, led to flooding problems across our Service area, with Fire Control receiving over 200 emergency calls related to flooding between 4 and 6 January 2024.

In Marlborough, the River Kennet rose to twice its usual level, resulting in 51 people being evacuated from the Town Mill, assisted by firefighters, Wiltshire Search & Rescue, South Western Ambulance Service and Wiltshire Council.

Our Service deployed specialist teams as more rescues were made in Marlborough. The local fire station was also flooded, resulting in the town fire engine being moved to a location nearby.

Before and during weather events we work with our partners to warn and inform through social media, local media and voluntary agencies.

January 2024, Marlborough



© Thomas Mae



## Multi-agency exercises

### Bournemouth University paramedics



We continue to work with Bournemouth University, and have developed a new training package for second year paramedic science students. We have worked with the University for some time, and they have now built four days into their curriculum for students to work alongside operational crews and develop their awareness and inter-agency skills for vehicle-related incidents.

From the first day the students arrive we deliver a theory module to the whole course, and on the

remaining three days, we split the course into groups, and they attended West Moors Training Centre for the practical elements. This was supported by crews from Christchurch, Poole, and Redhill Park. The firefighters were able to pass on their knowledge and techniques to the students, and trial a new method of casualty triage for dealing with multiple casualties. It is fantastic to be part of this training event moving forward, as we now have the opportunity to help and support the development of our future paramedics.



## Stourhead House

Working alongside the National Trust, and Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, we tested our response to an incident at Stourhead House, in May 2023. The exercise scenario was based on a sub-basement fire, specifically testing Breathing Apparatus operations, and salvage.

The National Trust also played a crucial role on the night, with a team of approximately 20 staff actively participating in salvage operations alongside the fire crews. Their involvement demonstrated the importance of close coordination between emergency responders, and heritage organisations, to minimise potential damage to valuable property.

Another challenge was testing the water supply to meet the demands of a real incident. The knowledge gained from this exercise will be instrumental in improving the emergency services' response to real incidents. It will also contribute to updating the building information we hold, which provides essential information to the responding crews. The Trust's team members appreciated the opportunity to be part of an emergency and salvage exercise, particularly for new members of staff.

The lessons learned from this exercise will help us protect our cultural heritage, and ensure the safety and well-being of the community.





## Bovington Camp

In June 2023, we worked with colleagues at Bovington Camp to further enhance our working relationship. We worked together to deliver a multi-agency training day to develop rescue skills and knowledge of military vehicle incidents.

The main aim of the event was to build rescuers' knowledge of military vehicles, and the issues we face during various incidents and casualty rescues. The day was well supported, with around 40 attendees from across our Service. There were also representatives from external agencies including;

- British Association for Immediate Care doctors,
- Devon & Somerset Air Ambulance,
- Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service,
- four medical regiments, and
- Bournemouth University medical science students.







## Widespread flooding

In November 2023, crews from Swindon and Stratton, worked with multiple agencies, to resolve a simulated widespread 'flooding at night' exercise at the Coate Water Lakes in Swindon. The exercise demonstrated the effective use of our water rescue capabilities in a multi-agency environment, rescuing 31 casualties in total. All casualties were supported on scene, then moved to a simulated rest centre run by the local authority.

The other agencies involved included Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA), Wessex 4x4 teams, Wiltshire Search & Rescue (WILSAR), Serve On, Swindon Borough Council, Avon FRS and HM Coastguard. A multi-agency debrief took place to highlight what went well, key learning points, and to establish more exercises of this type in the future. Initial feedback from the other agencies was extremely positive, with the exercise helping to build confidence in working together, as we moved into the wetter season.

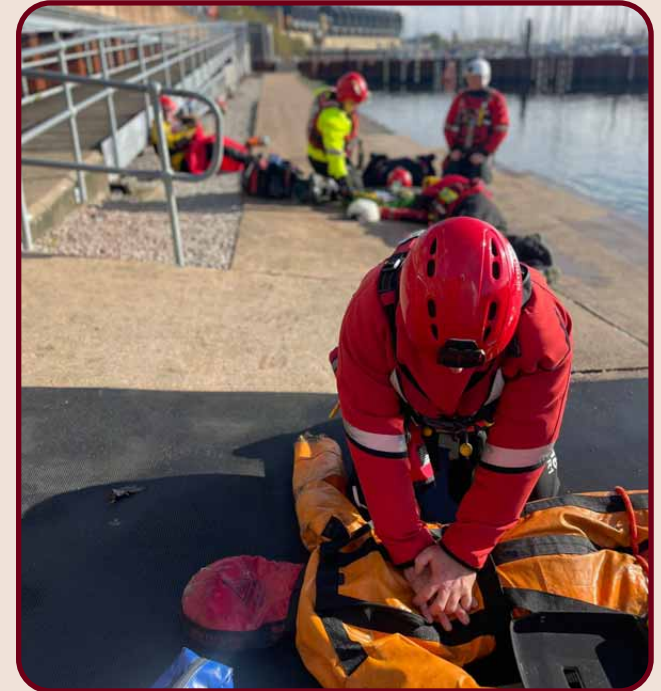
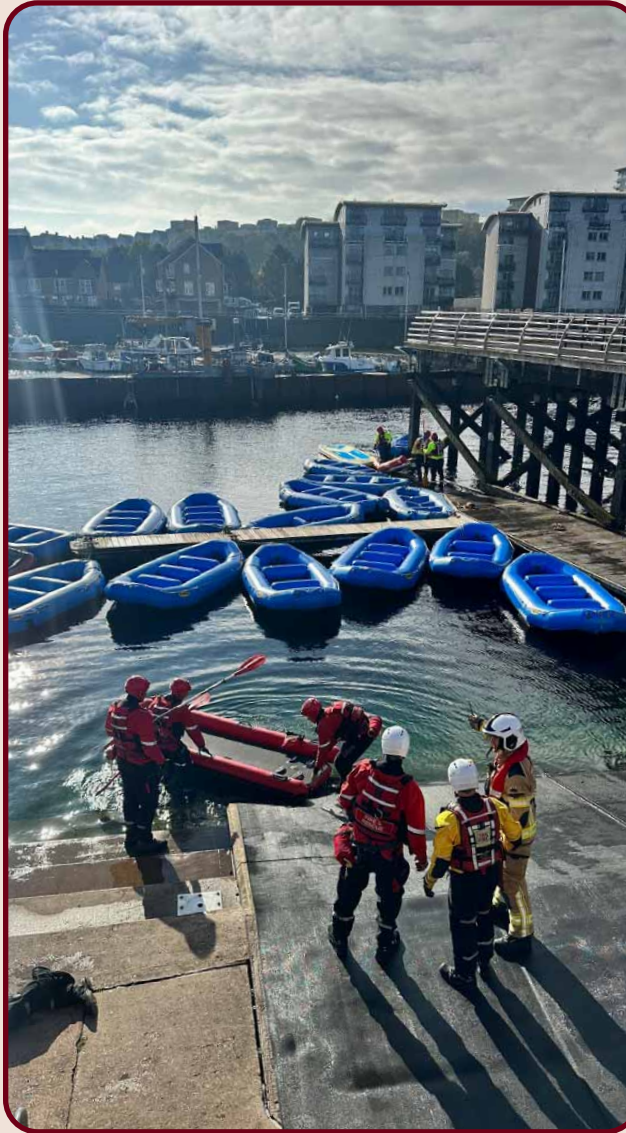




# 999 RESPONSE: Being there when you need us

## National exercise

We took part in a national exercise in October 2023. This took place over three days and was designed to test the UK national flood emergency response procedures, and allow flood teams from a range of agencies, to gain experience. Approximately 300 operational personnel from 14 different fire and rescue services and partner agencies took part.



## Summary

### This work has led to:

- safer firefighters and staff
- the best possible training for our firefighters, with continued development of our techniques and equipment, ensuring the best possible response
- fewer injuries and deaths from fires
- safer roads, with fewer road traffic collisions that result in injury and death
- continued improvements when working with partners and neighbouring fire and rescue services

### Looking ahead, we aim to:

- continue chairing the NFCC On-call Working Group, with the aim of strengthening the recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters
- invest in new fire engines, specialist vehicles, operational equipment and personal protective equipment
- review the efficiency and productivity of our fire stations, including the number and type of response vehicles needed, in relation to the risks, demand, and future financial sustainability
- review the shift systems our firefighters are working considering demand, risk, and future financial sustainability whilst maximising productivity

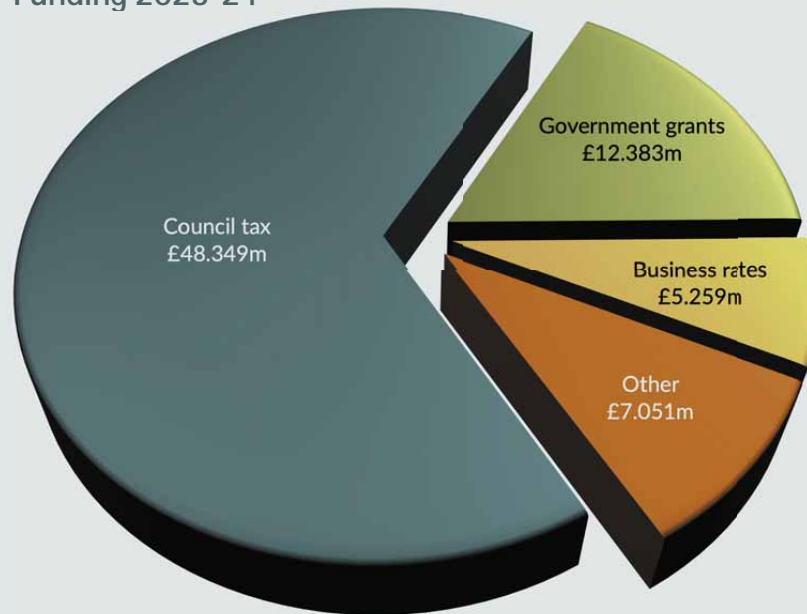




clean bill of health from external auditors, for financial management, and value for money

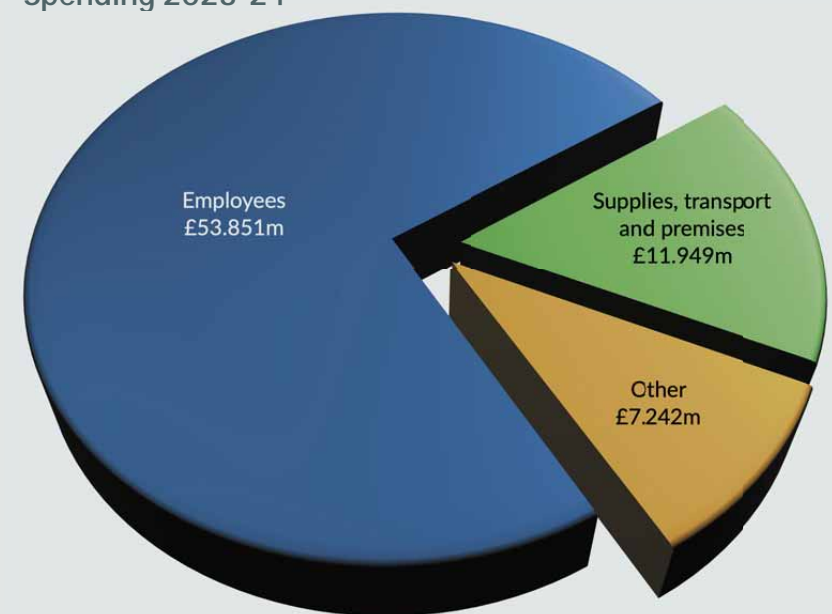
Our strong approach to ensuring value for money, along with good governance and financial management, was recognised for good work during our 2020 HMICFRS inspection. To support this, our full audit programme achieved substantial assurance from the South West Audit Partnership.

Funding 2023-24



Our budget is funded by a combination of council tax, and government grants, along with a share of local business rates. 73% of our funding comes from council tax, and for 2023-24 our Band D precept was £84.43. This compares to a national average of £87.70. The net budget for 2023-24 was £66m.

Spending 2023-24



Since 2016 we have continued to secure savings in excess of the £6.6m per year initially forecasted, with cumulative savings now totalling £55.8m to the end of March 2024. Ongoing annual revenue savings will total £11.2m during 2024-25.

Our medium-term financial planning shows that we still have significant financial challenges ahead if our share of central funding, council tax, and business rates does not improve. Based on our current budget

assumptions we have a forecast budget gap of £2m for 2025-26 which will increase to in excess of £3m over the medium term if we do not take immediate action. Overall costs have increased significantly, and the Authority now faces some difficult decisions to achieve a sustainable budget, and a balanced medium-term financial plan after 2024-25. Having completed a comprehensive fire cover review, we now have a thorough and detailed understanding of the financial

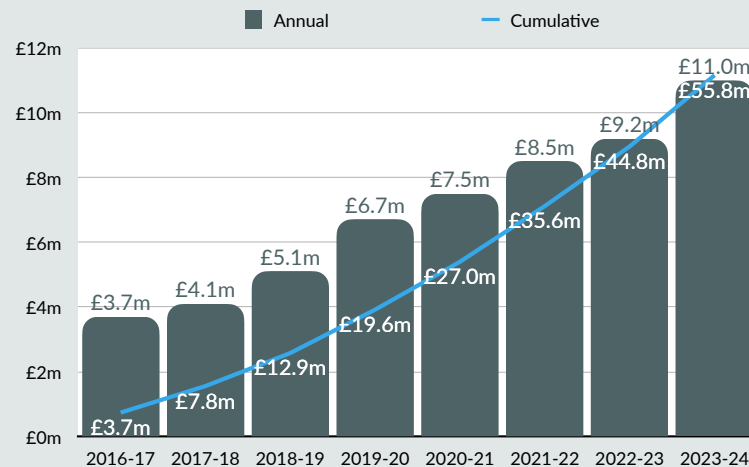


below average  
Band D council tax  
precept (£84.43  
compared to £87.70  
national average)

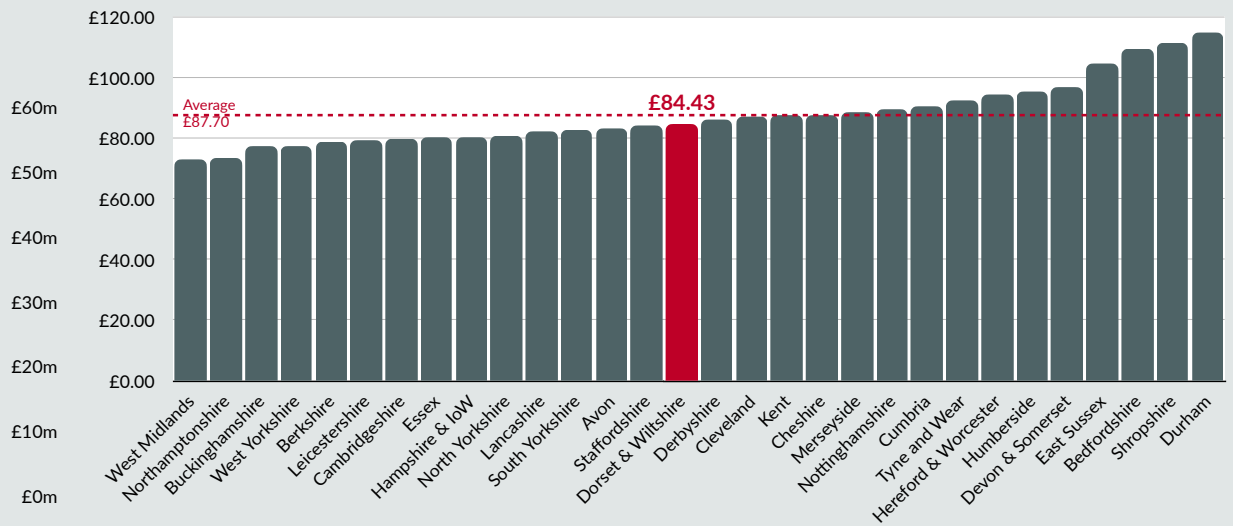


below average  
firefighter costs  
(£22.73 compared  
to £25.22 national  
average)

## Service savings



## Band D Council Tax charges for 2023-24





planning required to invest in our Service, make changes to improve efficiencies and productivity. This helps deliver savings of £2.5m per year over the next 12-24 months, through our Resourcing and Savings Programme.

The Authority's approved capital programme for 2023-24 totalled £7.1m. This included planned spending on maintaining our fire stations and other buildings, replacement vehicles and associated equipment, and new or replacement ICT equipment and information systems.

Our firefighter costs continue to be lower than the national average, with costs per 1,000 population of £22.73, compared to a national average of £25.22. More information about our financial planning and performance, including our approach to efficiency and value for money, is available through our website within the 'What we spend' section.

We proudly hold the accreditation to International Standard 45001 for occupational health and safety. This requires the British Standards Institution to visit, and audit us, twice each year, to ensure continued

compliance. In May 2023, our Service was awarded the ISO55001 accreditation for its Asset Management arrangements. This independent scrutiny provides assurance of how we manage our fleet and equipment.





Cyber security has remained a key focus for us, ensuring robust technical and procedural security arrangements continue to be in place. We received substantial assurance from our internal auditors this year about our cyber resilience in relation to ICT backups. Work to ensure our compliance with national standards set by the National Cyber Security Centre has meant that we are in a good



“I congratulate the Service on its first-rate performance in keeping people safe and secure from fires and other risks. We have judged

the Service to be outstanding in two areas; in the way it uses its resources to manage risk and that staff are equipped with the right training and skills”

**Wendy Williams CBE**

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

position to manage our risks, and to respond appropriately if we are impacted by a cyber-attack. Staff awareness training, exercises, simulations and the completion of security impact assessments are all contributing to this positive position.

Our compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and General Data Protection Regulations is good. Over 95% of all requests received are responded to within the required timescales.

Our Digital Transformation program has been using technology to make our processes more efficient and easier to use. We have also been improving how we use technology to manage data, which helps us to make better decisions.

Following on from the inspections in 2022, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services aim to complete

another full round of inspections of all fire and rescue services in England during 2024.

The results of our round two inspection in 2022 were published in January 2023 and we were judged to be 'Good' for delivering an effective service and for how we look after our People. We were also judged to be 'Outstanding' in how we manage our scarce resources efficiently.

During December 2023, we were one of ten fire and rescue services visited as part of the thematic inspection into how fire and rescue services handle misconduct. The Inspectorate selected a range of fire and rescue services with different geographical and demographic make-up as well as different governance models to ensure a balanced view across the sector. The final report was published on 1 August 2024. Additionally, the Inspectorate completed another full inspection of our Service in June 2024.

## Summary

This work has led to:

- our Service being rated as 'Outstanding' for Efficiency by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
- us spending less per head than average compared to other fire and rescue services
- comprehensive and robust assurance measures being in place, ensuring the maintenance of our efficient and effective Service
- improvements in our technology and infrastructure, enabling a more efficient and effective operational response
- continuous improvements in our cyber security to ensure we remain resilient against threats
- our Service delivering on commitments set out within our Environmental Sustainability Strategy, and aligning with the Climate Change Act 2010

Looking ahead, we aim to:

- continue to deliver year on year savings to help us set a balanced budget
- continue to review all elements of our Capital Programme and how it is funded to ensure that it is affordable now and in the future
- continue to review all revenue and capital expenditure to ensure that value for money is maximised
- use our fire cover review to redesign our operational response to better align our response services to changing risks and demands whilst at the same time maintaining financial stability
- monitor and report on environmental projects, financial and carbon savings

## Developing our people

Our staff's health, safety and wellbeing is of the utmost importance to us. They are appropriately trained to deal with the risks they may encounter when carrying out their roles. We have continued to develop our incident commanders and have introduced new technology to support them. For example, by providing body-worn cameras, our incident commanders can submit footage of real incidents for competence assessment. The use of these cameras will also allow remote support during incidents.

We continue to invest in software which provides opportunities for incident commanders to practice and develop their command and decision-making skills. It offers the ability to create immersive training simulations, which assess incident commanders in realistic-life situations.

As part of our workforce development, we continue to provide extensive leadership and management training with a focus around embedding the Code of Ethics and NFCC Leadership behaviours. All senior leaders have taken part in a 360 degree feedback session, aligned with our Code of Ethics, which assess performance and behaviours. We also offer a range of courses to enhance the skills of our leaders, so that they can drive cultural change, and enable all our staff to achieve their best, supported by positive action campaigns and initiatives, to further support underrepresented groups.

Our staff are developed in role using bespoke development opportunities, supported by our further education, and apprenticeship offerings. In the last year, 20 members of staff have completed an apprenticeship, with an additional 22 members of staff currently

enrolled. The apprenticeship options cover a wide range of areas right across our organisation. Commitment to this scheme provides opportunities for our staff and helps us retain talent.

To celebrate the success of our people, and their work, our annual awards ceremony includes long service and good conduct medals, as well as commendations, and awards, recognising outstanding contributions to our Service.







**1.4%**  
increase in staff  
absence, against the  
five year average



**9.45**  
days/shifts lost on  
average, per person,  
per year



**23.1%**  
diversity of our  
workforce

## Staff wellbeing

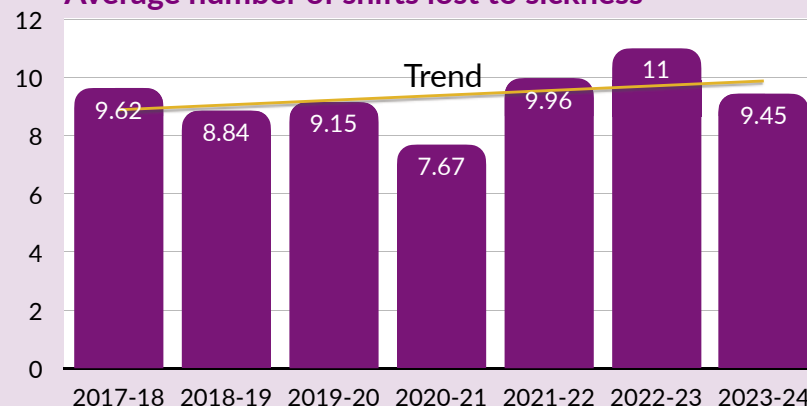
We are committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of our staff. We offer a range of physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing services. To support our operational staffs' fitness, all of our stations have well equipped gyms, and are supported by health and fitness advisers, and station based instructors. Our Service also offers physiotherapy treatment to staff, aiding their recovery.

Our Service has a dedicated health and wellbeing team, who work closely with line managers. Sickness absence is well managed, and a range of health and wellbeing procedures are in place, which outline all the support

mechanisms available to all staff, including physiotherapy, counselling, and other external self-service provisions.

Absence management is a key focus for us and continues to be well managed. Our Service has a corporate target, to achieve average sickness levels lower than the previous five-year average. The target for 2023-24 was 9.32 shifts/days lost per person, and this was narrowly exceeded, with an actual figure of 9.45 shifts/days lost per person. Whilst the long-term trend shows average sickness levels are increasing, this is an improvement compared to shifts/days lost last year.

Average number of shifts lost to sickness



Mental health absences are well managed by our Service, and includes the promotion of, and participation in, free preventative Wellness Workshops provided by The Fire Fighters Charity. The workshops have been developed with the aim of empowering fire service staff to live healthier and happier lives. A private healthcare scheme has been introduced and is available to staff through salary deduction and offers enhanced benefits for our staff.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion



Our Code of Ethics is embedded throughout numerous practices, including how we attract applicants, and the recognition, support, and development of our people. We continue to help our people understand how they apply our ethical principles every day, and how these enable us to provide a good service. We work hard to provide our services in an inclusive way, which does not discriminate.

The wellbeing of our staff is vital, and in January 2024 we introduced our 'Safe To' programme. 'Safe To' provides information, advice, and guidance, which helps our staff feel safe to be their best, and true self at work, both personally, and professionally.

In addition to our legal obligations, we are keen to learn from the communities we serve. Our engagement activities are integral in helping us to better understand the needs of our communities. Over the past year, we have worked with partners, and powerful guest speakers, as a 'two way' information exchange, to help enrich, and

enhance our understanding, community relationships, and engagement.

To better serve our communities, and benefit from different ideas, a more diverse workforce remains a priority for us. To help us achieve this, we use positive action activities to help attract, recruit, retain, and progress groups of people who are underrepresented in our Service. Women, people from an ethnic minority background, and LGBTQ+ people are proportionately underrepresented in our Service, compared to our communities across Dorset and Wiltshire. We therefore undertake activities to

attract these groups of people, using targeted advertising, inclusive information on our website, targeted community events, and opportunities for potential applicants to try operational activities, as we maintain the same entry standards for all.

We proactively approach community groups, and community leaders are also encouraged to invite us to events at [positiveaction@dwfire.org.uk](mailto:positiveaction@dwfire.org.uk). For more information, including our approach, objectives, and Annual Workforce Equality Report, please visit our website [www.dwfire.org.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion](http://www.dwfire.org.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion).

## Summary

### This work has led to:

- investment in the leadership development of our staff, ensuring they are equipped with the skills, and behaviours, to succeed in their role
- a good understanding of our workforce profile, which supports succession planning, and talent management
- increased staff confidence in the health and wellbeing arrangements in place, with low sickness absence
- increased levels of staff belonging, and psychological safety
- a more diverse workforce, which can better serve the community

### Looking ahead, we aim to:

- deliver any actions in response to our Service's internal workplace cultural review, and implement the recommendations from the Independent Review of Workplace Culture
- strengthen, and embed positive action, so we can attract, recruit, retain, and progress, a diverse workforce, which reflects the communities we serve
- improve membership, and allyship of our staff networks
- promote belonging, leadership, and psychological safety and wellbeing, through our Safe To programme
- maximise the benefits of our Leadership Development Programmes, evaluate and further develop them



# COULD YOU BE AN ON-CALL FIREFIGHTER?

Around two thirds of our firefighters work on an on-call basis. They are hugely important to both our Service and the communities that they serve. The majority of our 50 stations are crewed only by on-call firefighters. At many of our other stations on-call firefighters work alongside their wholetime colleagues.

On-call firefighters are paid professionals, who do the same work as their wholetime colleagues. Unlike wholetime firefighters, they may not be at the fire station when notified of an incident. They may be at home, or work, or have other commitments, responding to the station only when alerted.

On-call firefighters are usually contracted for between 40 and 120 hours of cover per week, but this can vary. Between them, each fire station team will provide cover for weekdays, evenings, nights, and weekends.

More information about becoming an on-call firefighter can be found on our website [www.dwfire.org.uk/on-call-firefighters](http://www.dwfire.org.uk/on-call-firefighters).



## Performance against corporate targets

Target	Performance
We will reduce the number of accidental dwelling fires, compared to the average attended during the last five years.	10.2% reduction
We will reduce the number of deliberate fires, compared to the average attended during the last five years.	8.4% reduction
We will reduce the number of road traffic collisions compared to the average attended during the last five years.	17.1% increase
We will audit 100% of all buildings that fall within each year of our risk based inspection programme.	Achieved
We will achieve a reduction in our attendance at unwanted automatic fire alarms, compared to the average attended during the last five years.	17.4% increase
We will achieve a ten minute response time for the first appliance in attendance at confirmed fires in sleeping risk premises. This includes call handling, turnout and travel time.	9 mins 31 secs (Achieved)
We will achieve a reduction in the average sickness levels, compared to the average during the last five years.	1.4% increase against 5-year average
We will improve the diversity of our workforce as a whole, compared to the last five years.	5.8% above target

Key ■ Target achieved

■ Working towards target

■ Target not achieved

# CONTACT US



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