



DORSET & WILTSHIRE  
FIRE AND RESCUE

# Annual Report 2024-25

PASSIONATE ABOUT  
**CHANGING & SAVING LIVES**

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# FOREWORD



**Cllr Clare Weight**

Chair of the Fire and  
Rescue Authority



**Andy Cole QFSM**

Chief Fire Officer

Over the past year, our fire and rescue service has remained extremely busy and faced a range of challenges. We've continued to see the growing pressures that affect us all – including the impact of technological advances such as AI, misinformation and growing risk of cyber-attacks, economic pressures, and a changing political landscape.

In 2024-25, our Service Control Centre received 16,988 emergency calls, and we responded to 12,722 incidents. This included rescuing 134 people from fires and 399 people following road traffic collisions.

Whilst responding to emergencies is a core responsibility, much of our work focuses on preventing incidents before they happen. We work closely with local communities and partner organisations to reduce risk. A major part of this is our Safe & Well programme, through which we carried out 7,358 visits to support vulnerable residents with fire safety advice and equipment.

We also help reduce fire and other risks by fitting smoke alarms and other safety devices, such as carbon monoxide detectors. In addition, we work with those most at risk on our roads through schemes that promote road safety education, like Safe Drive Stay Alive, helping people make safer choices.

# FOREWORD

Our fire safety team have continued to implement changes in fire safety legislation and support our local business community.

Over the last year, we completed 773 fire safety audits, gave advice through 546 licensing consultations, and responded to 1,572 consultations from building control. We also investigated possible fire safety breaches, issuing 29 enforcement notices and 20 prohibition notices where required. Additionally, our crews carried out 746 fire safety checks in local businesses to help them meet their legal responsibilities and keep people safe.

Throughout 2024–25, we have continued to make strong progress in delivering our Culture Action Plan, which is driving positive and lasting change across our organisation. This work is supported by clear governance and strong oversight, ensuring we maintain

both momentum and accountability at every stage.

The Culture Action Plan was shaped through meaningful engagement with colleagues, enhancing existing support and introducing new initiatives to better meet people's needs. To strengthen confidence in our approach, we have partnered with an independent professor of organisational psychology to develop a Culture Assurance Framework – much of which is already in place, with the final elements due to be completed in 2025. In addition, we have benefited from constructive support and challenge from an independent advisor, helping us ensure that these changes are effective and sustainable.

When HMICFRS carried out a full inspection in June 2024, their report – published in October – recognised five areas as 'Good'

and two as 'Adequate', which is a testament to the dedication, professionalism and hard work of our people. The inspection also highlighted that there is more to do to fully embed the positive cultural changes we are striving for. These findings reinforce why our Culture Action Plan is so important and why we remain committed, with humility and determination, to making further improvements where they are most needed.

This Annual Report gives you an overview of the work we've done over the past year and how we've performed. We hope it gives you confidence that we are working hard to keep you safe, respond when needed, and deliver a value for money Service. You can find more information about our work and our Community Safety Plan on our website, where you'll also find our contact details.



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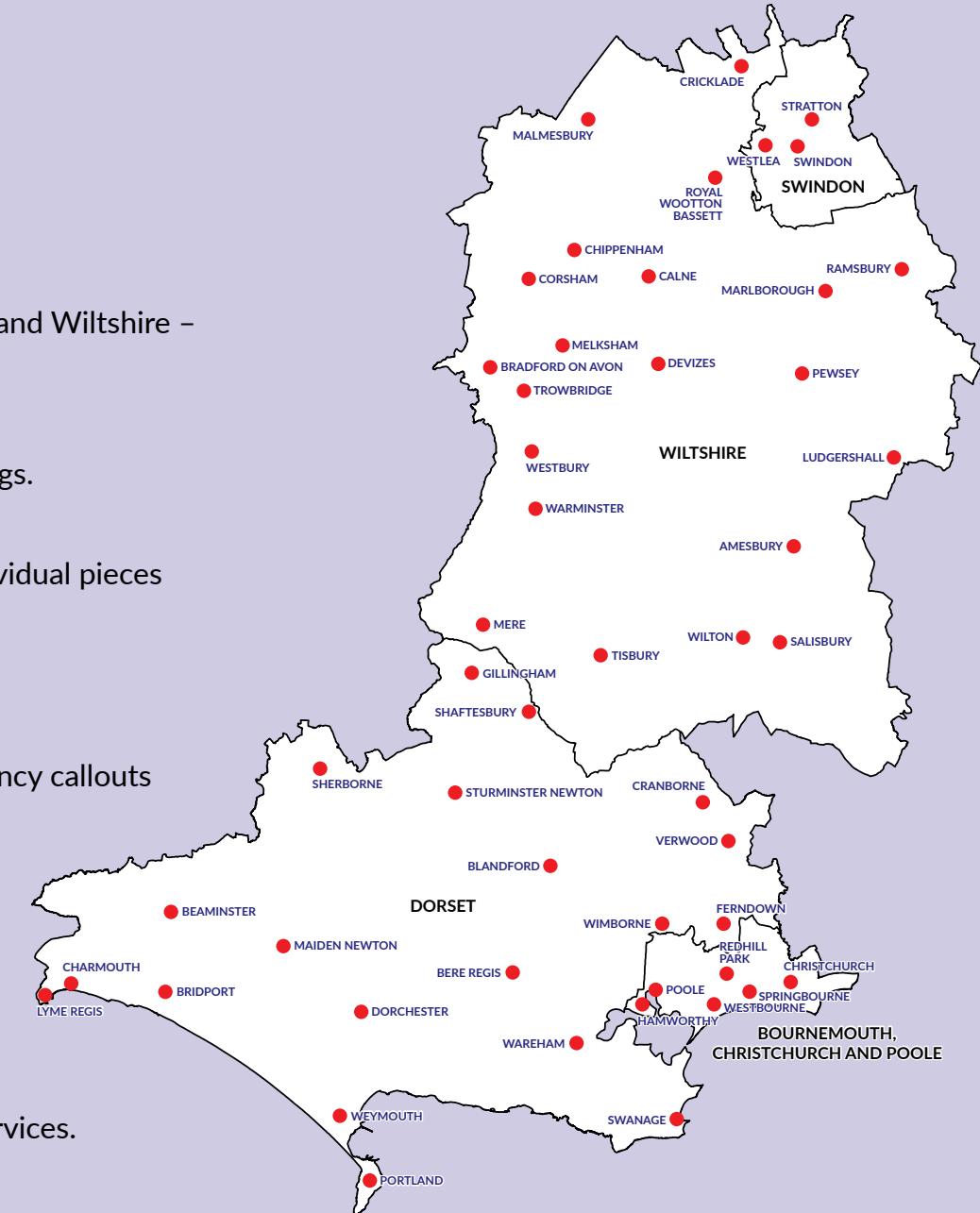
DORSET & WESSEX  
FIRE AND RESCUE

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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, specialist vehicles and just under 100,000 individual pieces of equipment.
- Delivers these services through a fantastic team of:
  - On-call firefighters who make themselves available for emergency callouts depending on their other commitments.
  - Wholetime firefighters, including those 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 provide our essential front-line services.
  - Volunteers who support us across our teams.



# ABOUT US

## 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

When most people think of the fire and rescue service, they think of our emergency response – but that's just one part of what we do. To guide our work and make the best use of our resources, we focus on five key priorities. These are designed to improve the safety and quality of life for everyone who lives in or visits the beautiful counties of Dorset and Wiltshire. This Annual Report shows how we've performed over the past year in delivering on those priorities.



## PREVENTION: Making safer and healthier choices



## Education

Our education programmes work towards the National Fire Chiefs Council's aim to "support all children and young people to be safe, healthy, resilient and active participants in the community". We remain committed to making a difference to the lives of the children and young people in Dorset and Wiltshire. We want to reduce the risk of harm by increasing their knowledge and understanding of some key



safety messages. Our education messages cover fire safety, but also other aspects to support our partners' campaigns too.

The four main themes are:

-  **Home fire safety**
-  **Outdoor fire safety**
-  **Road safety**
-  **Water safety**





# PREVENTION: Making safer and healthier choices

Other topics include:



Calling for help in an emergency.



The dangers and consequences of anti-social behaviour, such as hoax calls, deliberate fire setting and fire play.



Supporting young people develop practical strategies to help them make confident, positive choices.



Firefighters as inspirational role models, including healthy eating, keeping fit and career pathways.

We target specific schools for delivery based on fire risk. In doing this, we consider:



How quickly our crews can respond from the local fire station to the school.



Incident trends for the area.



Number of fires in homes, where children have been present, within the local area.



Socio-economic data for the area.

We will also support schools following fire incidents within their local area.

This intervention provides support and reassurance to the children, when needed.

Our fire safety education has an impact on the wider community, as well as school children. For example, after receiving fire safety education in school, two teenagers spotted a fire on their local heath. They were able to provide the appropriate information and support us and the police at the incident. With their intelligence the police were able to apprehend a suspect. As part of a Community Referral Order, a referral was made to us to work with the fire setter through our intervention programme and we've been able to support the individual through our positive behaviour change programme. Peer pressure can play a key role in influencing a young person's behaviour, and by providing

them with strategies and techniques, we can help them to make positive behavioural choices in the future. The positive response of the two teenagers was as a direct result of our education programme.

We try to support all children within our education system, by also providing appropriate education to Pupil Referral Units and Special Educational Needs schools, along with those who are home educated.

Where possible children's groups, such as Guiding and Scouting, can arrange to visit their local fire station. We provide education and fun activities to help them improve their knowledge and understanding of fire.

We will also host story times during school holidays at libraries. Our themed stories focus on seasonal themes, such as fireworks, Halloween or water safety.

Appropriate information safety advice is also provided to parents and carers. Children are encouraged to share the educational messages with their household following their school input, this reinforces messages and checks to be carried out, such as testing smoke detectors. During wildfire season we will send reminders to schools about the importance of outdoor fire safety, such as BBQ and campfires, and many more. Seasonal quizzes are created and shared via social media for further engagement opportunities where we received 723 quiz entries.





# PREVENTION: Making safer and healthier choices

## Fire Safety Intervention

We work to a nationally agreed programme to support children and young people who have engaged in risky behaviours related to fire or have a fear of fire. Our early intervention encourages referrals to support the child in their home as soon as there is a concern. A referral is made if a child is showing an interest in fire setting, or if they have started playing with fire in the open or at home. The aim is to help the child to understand the consequences of playing with fire and help them to understand what positive behaviour change is and how they can achieve this.

### Impact to wider society:

#### School Education

In 2024-25 we provided safety education to 43,896 children. Our educational input was delivered to schools, children's groups and during community engagement activities. By positively framing our behaviour change safety messages we hope the children will go home and influence good fire safety practices within their homes, by reminding adults to test the smoke detectors and not to overload electrical sockets. The estimated cost of a house fire is **£55,589**, with a societal savings figure of **£4m**.

Our aim is to reduce the risk of fire within their homes and wider community. We have responded to 51 referrals, this year, from concerned parents or carers, as well as professionals, such as:



Children's Services



Police



Teachers



Youth Justice Service

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.

We have over 20 specialist trained advisors that work in pairs to support the child and their families when a referral is made.

## Community focus:

### Fire Safety Outdoors

We continue to work in collaboration with Dorset Heath Partnership (DHP), which includes part-funding the post of FireWise Assistant. Through our collaborative approach, education and monitoring of the heath, an analysis of data is carried out to ensure we protect our vulnerable wildlife area. In our Strategic Assessment of Risk we identify that the risk of wildfire remains high, and that the frequency is growing due to climate change. With longer drier summers anticipated, this could lead to drier vegetation and more frequent larger wildfires for us to manage. Outdoor fire safety education is provided to children of all ages to help reduce the risk of fires in our protected spaces. We provide education to our primary schools, whilst the DHP provide this to secondary schools. By working collaboratively, we

can ensure social media messages are consistent and targeted to the appropriate people. An example of this is our **#BringAPicnicNotABBBQ** campaign, where our aim is to reduce risk by encouraging our local communities to enjoy our wonderful outdoor spaces by bringing a picnic, not a BBQ, as disposable BBQs are a known

cause of heath and forest fires. We both have volunteers that patrol the heathlands providing appropriate guidance and support to the public. Our volunteers walk the heath, with DHP having a K9 walkers patrolling. We engage closely with local schools as and when incidents occur and will continue to evaluate our approach.





## PREVENTION: Making safer and healthier choices



## Home visits

Last year we carried out 7,358 Safe and Well visits in homes. During our visits we provide residents with advice and support tailored to their needs. Our primary aim is to reduce fire risks within the home, but we make sure the household is left with appropriate information about other safety concerns too. This year 13% of our visits resulted in a referral to other agencies, such as local authority services, NHS and policing, who were able to provide further help and support.

If we are unable to arrange a visit, we provide educational literature and we have supported 524 people in this way. There will be occasions when someone would prefer not to invite us into their home to provide a full visit. In this instance, we will give over the doorstep advice and support,

181 people were supported in this way this year. Through these approaches we have provided home fire safety advice and support to 8,063 households this year.

We continue to work with key partners within our communities to make sure vulnerable people are identified and referred to us for fire risks to be considered. We have received referrals from our partners for 7,728 households, from 121 different partner organisations. Referrals are made from partner services, such as Ambulance, Hospitals and Police. However, the majority of our referrals come from utility companies Priority Service Registers. Our top five referral organisations are Wessex Water, Thames Water, South West Ambulance Service, Air Liquide and The Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust.





# PREVENTION: Making safer and healthier choices

## Community focus:

Cluttered and hoarded properties continue to be a fire risk to the individual, their immediate neighbours and our firefighters too. We continue to work collaboratively with partner organisations to help individuals. We can refer to and support some peer networks that directly address the risks with individuals. We also attend multi-agency meetings where specific cases will be considered and discussed. Through Safeguarding partnerships appropriate protocols have been created which we sign up to support and utilise. Through the National Fire Chiefs Council we contribute nationally to initiatives, this also helps provide appropriate resources and keep our staff up to date with emerging risks and trends.



We also provide education on the risks of carbon monoxide, including signs and symptoms of poisoning. We have an excellent working partnership with SGN and Wales and West Utility, who provide funding for the carbon monoxide detectors we provide to the public. Last year we accessed £48,046 of funding, which provided 3,862 CO detectors, and 370 detectors which can be interlinked with a system for someone who has a hearing impairment. Since our partnership began in January 2021, we have received £128,101 worth of detectors and have provided nearly 12,000 detectors.

Our staff have up to date local information for signposting. When we identify people in need of additional support, we can signpost them to the most appropriate services, such as smoking cessation and trading standards support. This year we have provided 282 Safe and Independent Living referrals to other agencies for this additional support. We also have agreements in place to ensure those we refer receive appropriate, and timely support.

When someone has received a threat of arson, our trained advisors will prioritise these visits to provide appropriate resources and support to help minimise the risk. We visited 29 properties where additional protection, such as locking letterboxes and fire-retardant products where provided.

Smoking continues to be one of the largest fire risks. Whilst we do provide appropriate advice, on occasions it is appropriate to provide fire-retardant bedding products to help keep the occupier safe. We provided 165 sets to particularly high fire risk households. This not only reduces the risk to the occupier, but the wider community too.

### Impact to wider society:

Fire prevention fosters a culture of preparedness and resilience within communities. The foremost impact of fire prevention is the preservation of life and property, by reducing the occurrence of fires, preventing injuries, fatalities and the destruction of homes and businesses. Fires can have a devastating economic consequence, including property damage and loss of livelihood.

If only **1%** of Safe & Well visits prevent a house fire, that could equate to **£4m** estimated societal savings and by not attending, the Service saved **£95k**.





## PREVENTION: Making safer and healthier choices



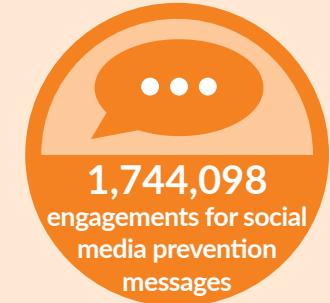


# PREVENTION

## Road safety

We attended 681 road traffic collisions and carried out 399 rescues. We take a collaborative approach to road safety, ensuring we work with Dorset Road Safe and Wiltshire & Swindon Road Safety Partnerships. We have generated over £12,700 of funding towards roads safety and a further £7,000 towards Biker Down.

Over the last year we have taken the opportunity to review our road safety delivery model, following national research into behaviour change and the impact of messages being provided. We have commenced a pilot of our new delivery model, Go Drive, and we have received excellent feedback. Our new model also reduces the need for wider partners to support, which will be a saving to the public purse.

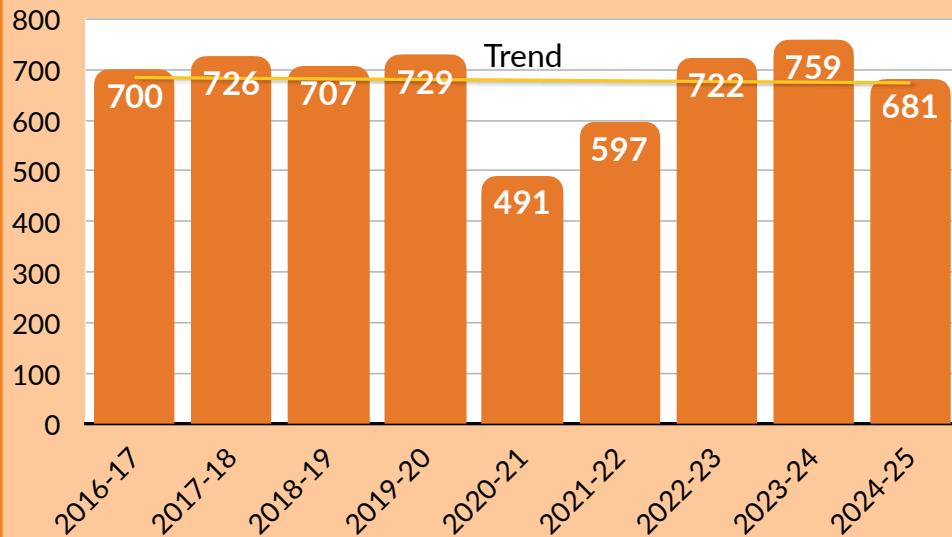




## PREVENTION: Making safer and healthier choices

### Impact to wider society:

#### RTCs attended



We support community safety events, which attract a wide range of community members, this year we have attended 10 events with partners. Our attendance at these events has met community needs in terms of child car seat checks, older drivers' forums and drink and drug driving campaigning.

- 34 Go Drive events, at 34 schools, with 4,564 attendees.
- 5 Safe Drive Stay Alive events with 578 attendees.
- 3 Safe Drive Stay Alive digital events, with 170 attendees.
- 1 MOD Survive the Drive.
- 2 Biker Down events, with 42 attendees.

## Summary

### This work has led to:

- Greater awareness and understanding of the risks of accidental and preventable fires in the home, which have led to a reduction in fires.
- Reduction in fires and other emergencies has led to increased societal savings.
- Reduction of deliberate fires.
- Targeted road safety education for vulnerable road users, which increases awareness and helps reduce the risk of preventable collisions.
- Continued support for those most vulnerable in society, we help people live for longer in their own homes.
- Less hospital admissions for vulnerable people which reduces demand on public services.

### Looking ahead, we aim to:

- Maximise financial savings from the reduction in fires, and other emergencies.
- Reach more people 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





# PROTECTION



## Fire safety

The Building Safety Act 2022 has introduced additional responsibilities for Responsible Persons, requiring all businesses to carry out fire risk assessments. Our Business Support Advisors play a proactive role in engaging with businesses to support them in ensuring compliance with these requirements.

Under the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, Responsible Persons are now required to provide building safety information. This provision of information enables us to continue supporting resident safety in residential buildings. Our Building Safety Regulator (BSR) staff are allocated to



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

undertake Building Assessment Certificates in line with the inspection framework and the regional operating model. All this positive work enhances resident safety within high-rise residential buildings, in line with the government response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations.

Our priorities are to audit all higher risk buildings, working in collaboration with our partners. Over the past year, our wholetime crews have provided valuable education to smaller businesses by conducting 746 fire safety checks, contributing to a total of 7,036 positive engagements with businesses.

New technology and infrastructure projects within our communities, have created additional workstreams and activities for our Service. For example, the growing number of Battery Energy Storage Systems and solar farm sites has led to increased engagement between the Service and both developers and local authority planning officers.

We have taken formal action against businesses that failed to comply with the Fire Safety Order. In the past year, we issued 29 enforcement notices and 20 prohibition notices. Our Prosecution Team continues to develop and share best practice within the South-West region to enhance evidence capture and the service of formal action notices.





## Fire safety concerns

We continue to respond to fire safety concerns raised by the public and our partners. A total of 252 high-priority fire safety concerns were raised and responded to in the last year.

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.

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).

Further information in regards to Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), can be found at [www.dwfire.org.uk/battery-energy-storage-systems-bess](http://www.dwfire.org.uk/battery-energy-storage-systems-bess).





# PROTECTION: Protecting you and the built environment from harm

## 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. This is through tighter procedures, call challenge processes, and providing advisory support.
- Increased engagement with partners through updated Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) and information sharing to identify high risk fire safety concerns.
- Progress towards third party accreditation for our inspectors and improved competence through specialist training and additional CPD opportunities.
- Increased confidence and consistency in gathering evidence to support enforcement and prosecution activity.
- An increased social media and web-based media presence including enhanced FAQs to support consistent advice and greater outreach through targeted webinars and face to face seminars.

### Looking ahead, we aim to:

- Continue our fire safety enforcement strategy and Risk-Based Intervention Programme.
- Comply with statutory requirements to minimise fire risks.
- Prioritise high risk areas, taking proportionate actions to mitigate risks and ensure accountability.
- Regularly update and share clear information on our website.
- Maintain compliance monitoring and if necessary, enforcement of fire safety legislation.
- Focus on high fire risk premises through the Risk-Based Intervention Programme.
- Reduce excessive Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) activations.



999 RESPONSE: Being there when you need us

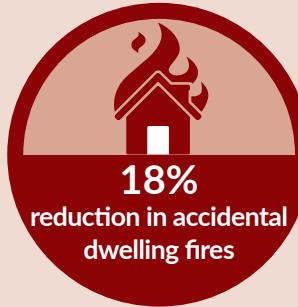


## Emergency response

24 hours a day, 365 days a week; our highly skilled and professional operators answer calls and mobilise resources to resolve the situation. A request into Service Control Centre, initiates every emergency response and this year they answered 16,988 emergency calls.

We continue to be part of the Networked Fire Services Partnership (NFSP) along with Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, and Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service. Where we work closely together, and all 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 but importantly offers good resilience to each Service's Control Centre team.



We prioritise our resources to saving lives. Therefore, we will send two fire engines where there is an incident at a building where people sleep, this includes private dwellings, care homes, hospitals, sheltered accommodation, student accommodation and hostels. We aim for the first

fire engine to arrive within 10 minutes of receiving the initial call. For buildings classified as a sleeping risk, our average response time last year was 10 minutes and 17 seconds. For all other buildings, the target remains 10 minutes, with an average response time last year of

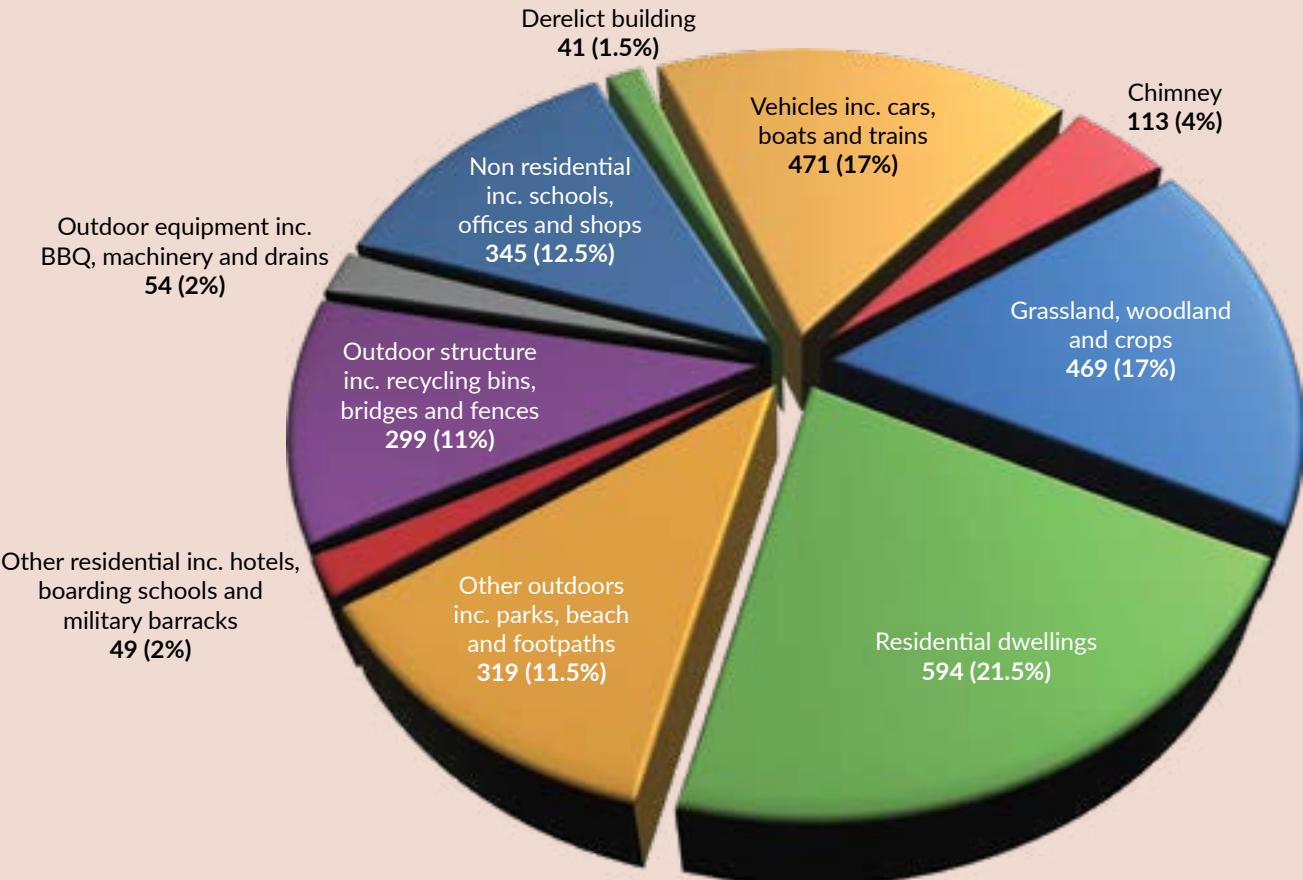
9 minutes and 31 seconds. One of the factors that contributed to the average response time exceeding the 10-minute target for sleeping risk properties was a series of multiple emergency calls to the same premises in a rural location outside of our 10-minute response area.

# 999 RESPONSE: Being there when you need us

We focus our community engagement efforts on supporting the most vulnerable members of our communities. This is especially important in rural areas, where emergency response times may be longer. We do this by identifying potential hazards and prioritising fire safety education and prevention to proactively reduce the risk of fires.

Regrettably, despite the best efforts of our firefighting crews, not all of the incidents we attend have positive outcomes, and people do lose their lives in fire-related incidents. His Majesty's Coroner has confirmed one fire related death in 2024-25. There were a further five deaths in fire related incidents last year, His Majesty's Coroner has yet to determine if they were caused by fire.

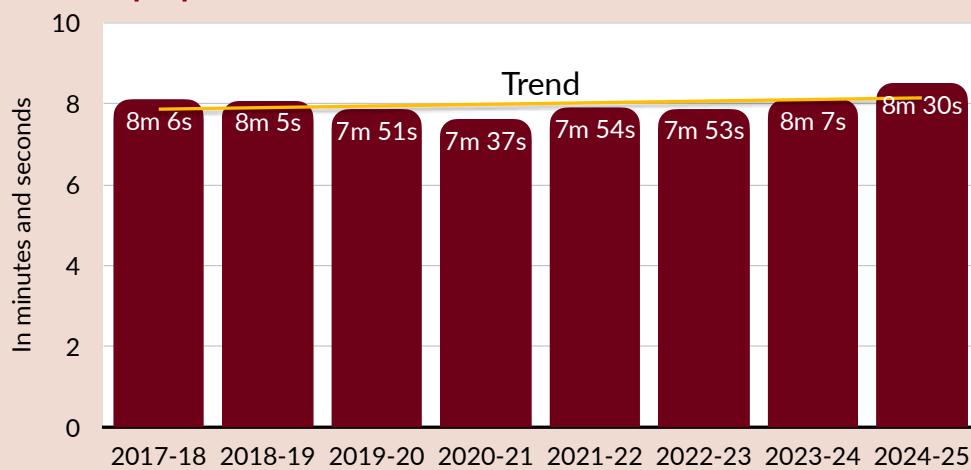
## Types of fire attended 2024-25



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

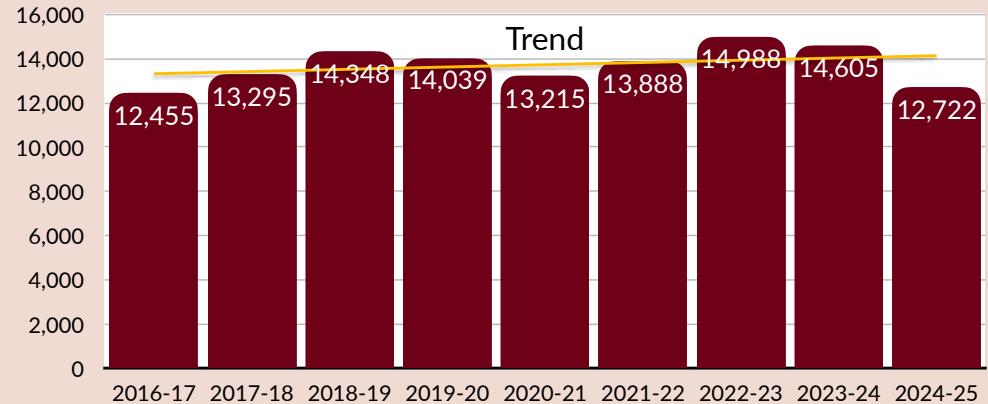


**Average response time of first fire engine to sleeping risk properties within our ten minute isochrone\***

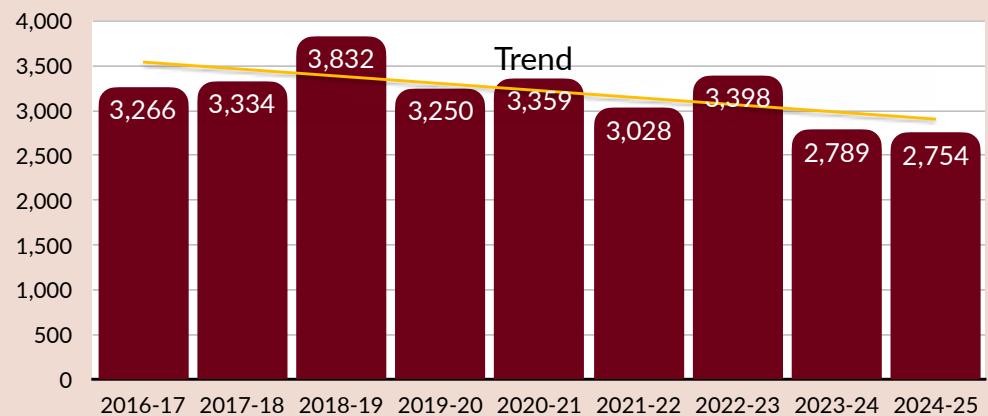


**Long term trends**

**Number of incidents attended**

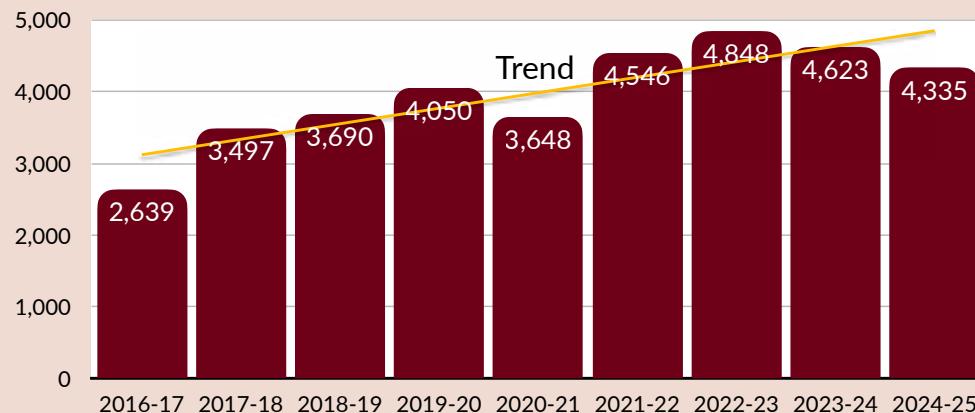


**Number of fires attended**

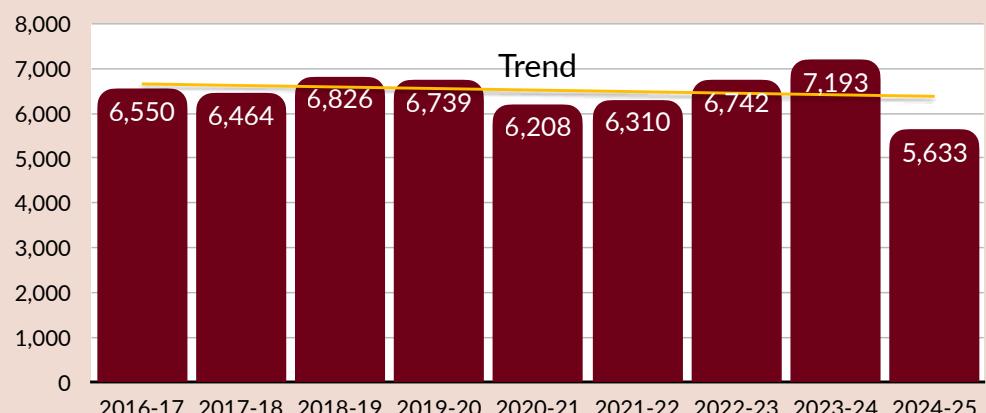


\* An isochrone is the area reached within a 10 minute travel time from our fire stations. Factors such as traffic or poor weather conditions may affect our ability to achieve a 10 minute response time within these areas

Number of non-fire related incidents



Number of incidents that turned out to be false alarms



We have continued to see an increase at non-fire related incidents this year. These incidents are primarily those where we support our partners. This includes supporting the ambulance service to gain access to properties, and attending to people who have collapsed behind closed doors. We refer to these type of incidents as special service calls.

Over the last five years we have focussed our efforts in the reduction of unwanted fire

calls, due to faulty alarms or alarms caused by issues such as dust or burnt cooking, this has been a priority for the Service and has resulted in the following estimated savings:

**Savings in time** 476hrs (whole time)

**Cost avoided** £146,100 (on-call)

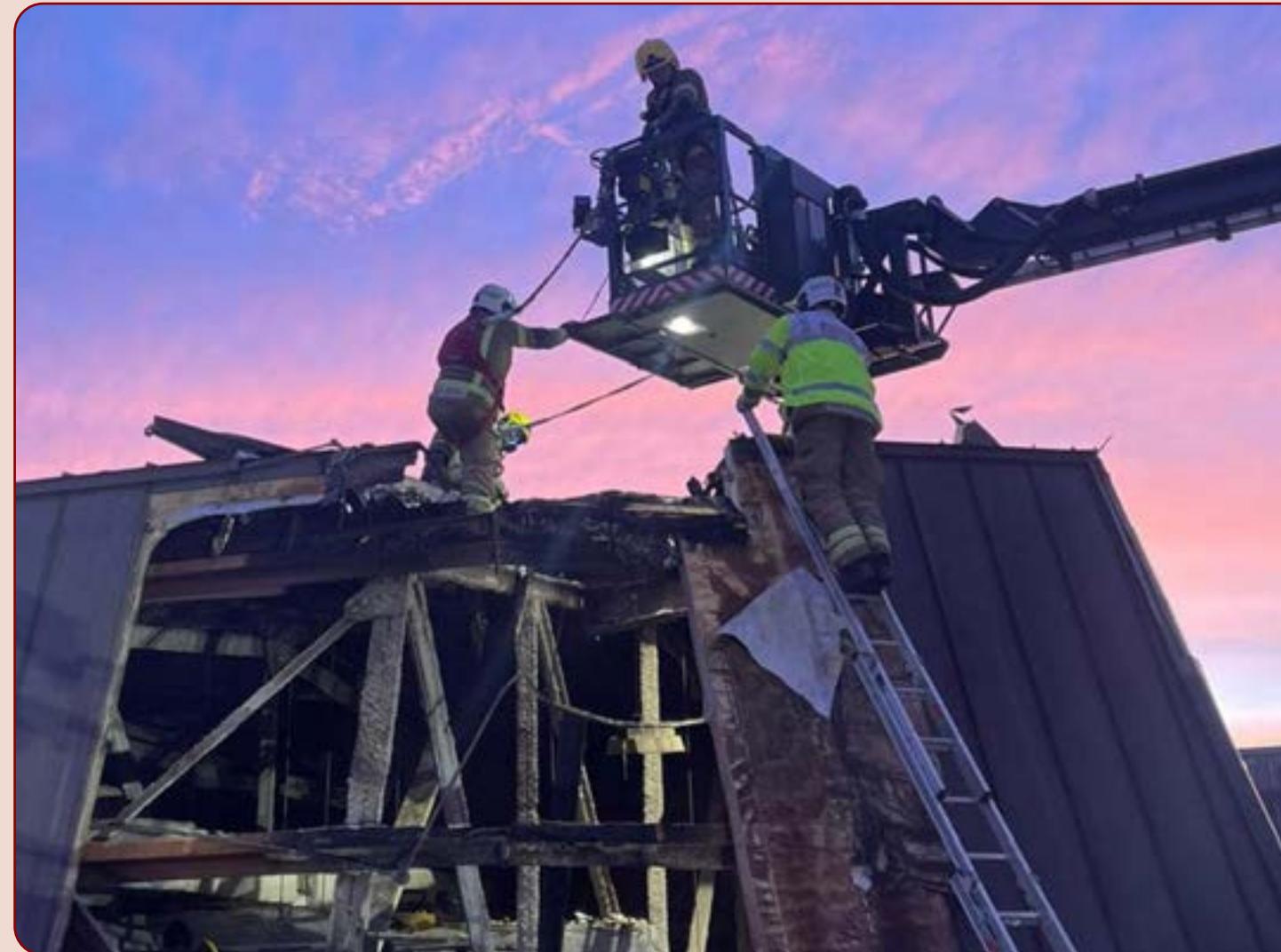
Tackling fires or rescuing people from road traffic collisions represents only a small portion of the wide range of incidents we respond to. Our technical rescue teams

are specially trained to carry out complex rescues, including those from height, water, and confined spaces. They also receive dedicated training in animal rescue. When challenging extrications or rescues are required, these teams are equipped to support our ambulance service colleagues. In addition, we have firefighters with specialist training to respond to incidents such as road traffic collisions involving large vehicles, and others who are specifically trained to manage and contain wildfires.

## Incidents

Throughout 2024-25, crews from across Dorset & Wiltshire have responded to several significant incidents that tested our operational resilience.

On 10 April 2024, a fire broke out in a second-floor plant room at Swindon Crown Court. With the swift response from multiple crews, supported by an aerial ladder platform and a specialist unit, the fire was extinguished using hose reel and main jets, with no major internal damage. As a result, court services were able to recommence the following day.



## 999 RESPONSE: Being there when you need us

In November 2024, Storm Bert caused severe flooding across the Service area. On 25 November 2024, Chippenham town centre faced its worst flooding in over 60 years, with impassable roads and widespread disruption. As the storm progressed, the River Avon burst its banks in Bradford on Avon, where crews supported the safe movement of residents across the flooded bridge.



Earlier that month, on 12 November 2024, firefighters tackled a major fire at a takeaway restaurant on Northgate Street in Devizes. The fire had spread through the terraced property and into the roof spaces of neighbouring buildings, all residents of which were safely evacuated.



## 999 RESPONSE: Being there when you need us

Just a day later, on 13 November 2024, eight crews responded to a serious bungalow fire on Drove Road, Swindon, where firefighters rescued a male occupant and handed him into the care of the ambulance service.



During early Spring 2025, resources were deployed to multiple large-scale wildfires across Upton Heath and Canford Heath in Poole. These incidents, fuelled by dry conditions and strong winds, posed serious threats to wildlife habitats, residential areas, and local infrastructure. Our crews worked hard in arduous conditions alongside partners from local authorities, environmental agencies, and other emergency services to control the fires, minimise environmental damage, and ensure the safety of the surrounding communities. These incidents highlighted the professionalism, adaptability, and collaborative strength of our Service in responding to increasingly complex and dynamic risks.



# 999 RESPONSE: Being there when you need us

## Training Exercises

In 2024-25, we completed a total of 57 training exercises. This included 23 cross-border exercises with neighbouring fire services, 30 multi-agency exercises with partner organisations, and several that involved Service Control Centre to support effective incident coordination. The examples below demonstrate the range and scope of these training activities.

In September 2024, crews took part in a multi-agency exercise designed to test the activation of the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Major Accident External Emergency Plan for the Perenco site at Wytch Farm. The exercise aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing response arrangements by simulating the early stages of a major incident involving hazardous

substances. It tested the accuracy of contact information, the reliability of the callout cascade, and measured the total time taken to activate the plan from start to finish. The exercise also served to raise awareness among all partner agencies of the current

activation procedures and roles, while identifying areas for improvement. Insights gathered during the exercise informed updates to planning, ensuring it remains fit for purpose and aligned with best practice in multi-agency emergency response.



On 4 October 2024, crews from the Swindon and Wiltshire area participated in a joint Service, cross border, exercise with Oxfordshire FRS at a newly designated COMAH site in the Swindon area. In preparation, local crews, hazardous material advisors, and operational risk teams collaborated with the Health and Safety Executive, Environment Agency, and partner agencies to develop site-specific risk information and tactical response plans. The exercise simulated a large-scale fire at a commercial premises involving hazardous chemicals and complex rescues. It also tested the interoperability of multi-agency partners including police, ambulance, Red Cross volunteers, and Swindon Borough Council - who trialled their emergency rest centre procedures. A comprehensive debrief followed to support continuous improvement.



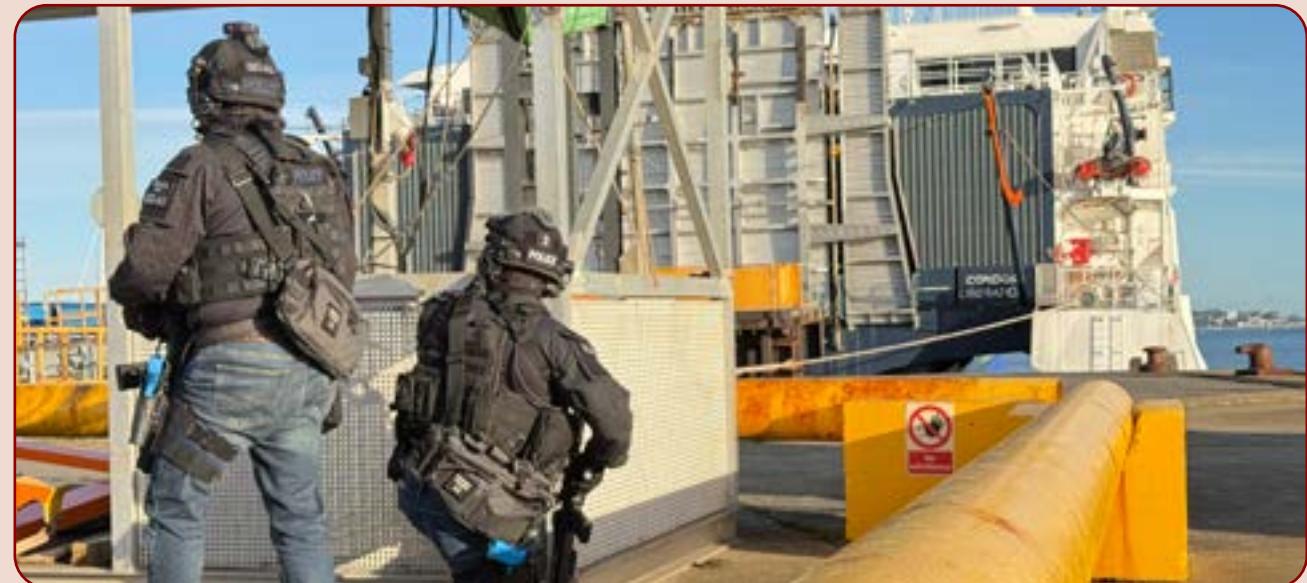
# 999 RESPONSE: Being there when you need us

An exercise on 20 May 2024 saw crews from the Swindon area work with the Great Western Hospital to test emergency procedures.

The scenario focused on safely evacuating multiple operating theatres, extinguishing a fire, and navigating high-pressure decision-making, while accounting for patient needs, on-site hazards, and maintaining hospital operations.



In January 2025, some of our crews took part in a large-scale multi-agency counter-terrorism exercise at Poole Port. This was designed to test and enhance our collective response to a simulated terrorist attack. The exercise involved close coordination with Dorset Police, South Western Ambulance Service, Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, and other Category 1 and 2 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act. It provided a vital opportunity to refine command and control arrangements, enhance casualty triage and treatment processes, and validate interoperability using Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) principles. By simulating this complex, high-threat scenario, in a challenging environment, the exercise reinforced operational readiness, improved situational awareness among all partners, and strengthened our joint ability to safeguard the public and critical infrastructure.



© Dorset Police

On 27 February 2025, we took part in a multi-agency exercise on Portland. This regular exercise is designed to rigorously test all command and control arrangements in the event of a radiation emergency under the Radiation Emergency Preparedness and Public Information Regulations 2019 (REPIR '19). Coordinated in collaboration with the Royal Navy, the exercise included the full activation of strategic command elements such as the Strategic Coordination Centre (SCC), Scientific and Technical Advice Cell (STAC), and the Wider Information Cell (WIC). This made for a realistic and challenging environment for all agencies involved.

In preparation for this, an activation exercise was conducted approximately a week prior. This tested the activation and alerting mechanisms, ensuring

readiness for the more complex and high-profile exercise. These exercises were not only a statutory requirement but also a vital opportunity to strengthen

inter-agency coordination. They validate emergency procedures, and ensure public safety in the event of a radiological release associated with Royal Navy operations.



## Summary

### This work has led to:

- Enhanced safety for firefighters and staff, by providing high-quality training and ongoing development in equipment and techniques to ensure the most effective and safe emergency response.
- Reduced harm from fire incidents, by striving to lower the number of injuries and fatalities caused by fire through proactive prevention and rapid intervention.
- Improved road safety, by working to decrease the frequency and severity of road traffic collisions, reducing the impact on individuals and communities.
- Stronger collaboration with partners, by building on our joint working arrangements with partner agencies and neighbouring fire and rescue services to deliver even greater outcomes.

### Looking ahead, we aim to:

- Maintain leadership of the NFCC On-Call Working Group. Continue to lead national efforts to improve the attraction, recruitment, and retention of on-call firefighters through targeted initiatives and collaborative best practice.
- Enhance operational capability through investment. Commit to upgrading our fleet with modern fire engines, specialist appliances, cutting-edge equipment, and high-standard personal protective gear to support safe and effective response.
- Evaluate station efficiency and resource alignment. Undertake a thorough review of fire station operations, assessing vehicle provision and response capability against local risks, Service demand, and long-term financial viability.

# £ GOVERNANCE: Making every penny count

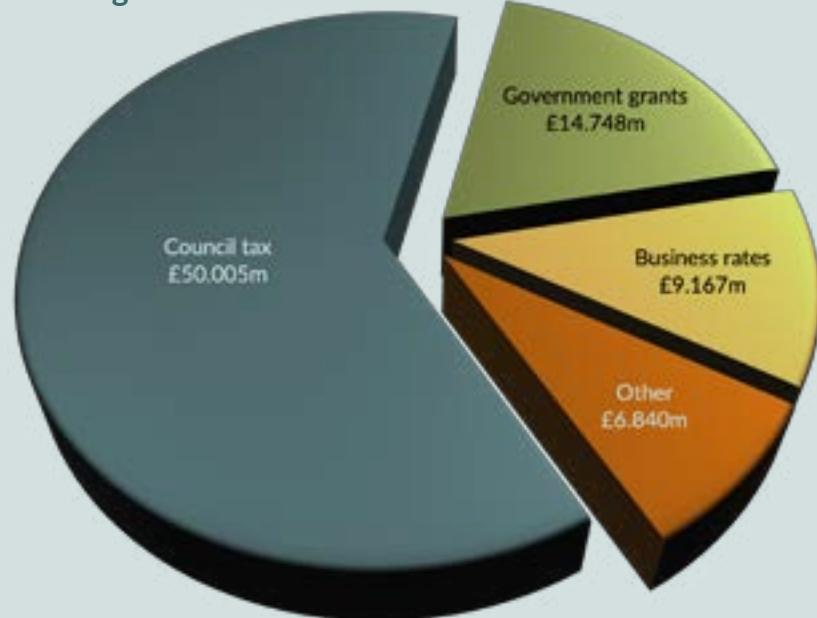


Ensuring value for money, along with good governance and financial management, is at the heart of everything we do. This is supported by the continued positive assurance from both our internal and external auditors.

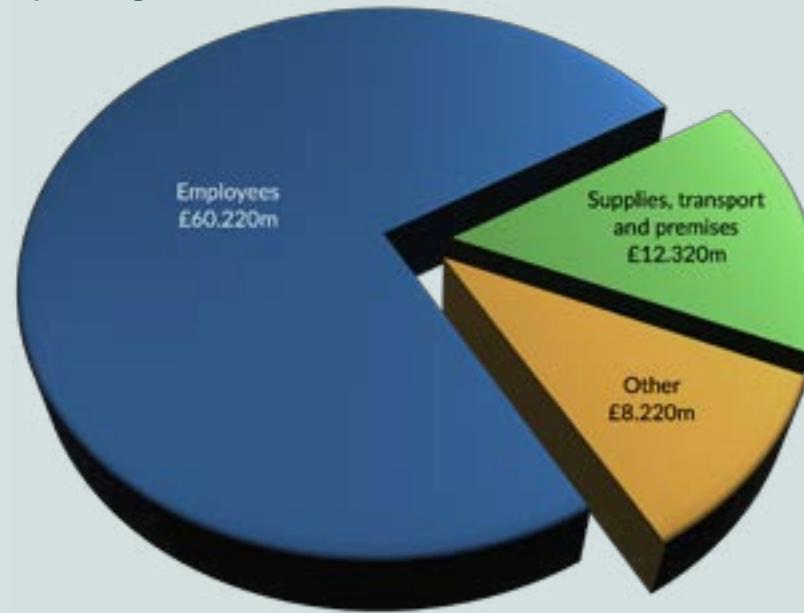
Our budget is funded by a combination of Council tax and Government grants along with a share of local business rates. Over two thirds of our funding comes from Council tax. In 2024-25 our Band D precept was **£86.95**, this is below the national average of **£90.32**. Our net revenue budget for 2024-25 was **£73.9m**.



Funding 2024-25



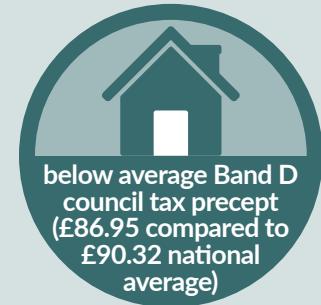
Spending 2024-25



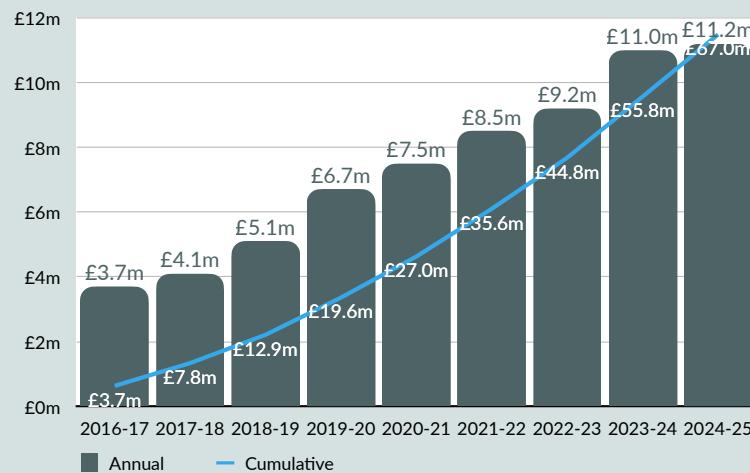
# £ GOVERNANCE: Making every penny count

Since our combination during 2016, the Service has continued to deliver ongoing efficiencies in excess of the **£6.6m** per year initially forecasted. The cumulative savings since this time has now achieved **£67m**, up until March 2025. Ongoing annual revenue savings did exceed **£11.2m** during 2024-25.

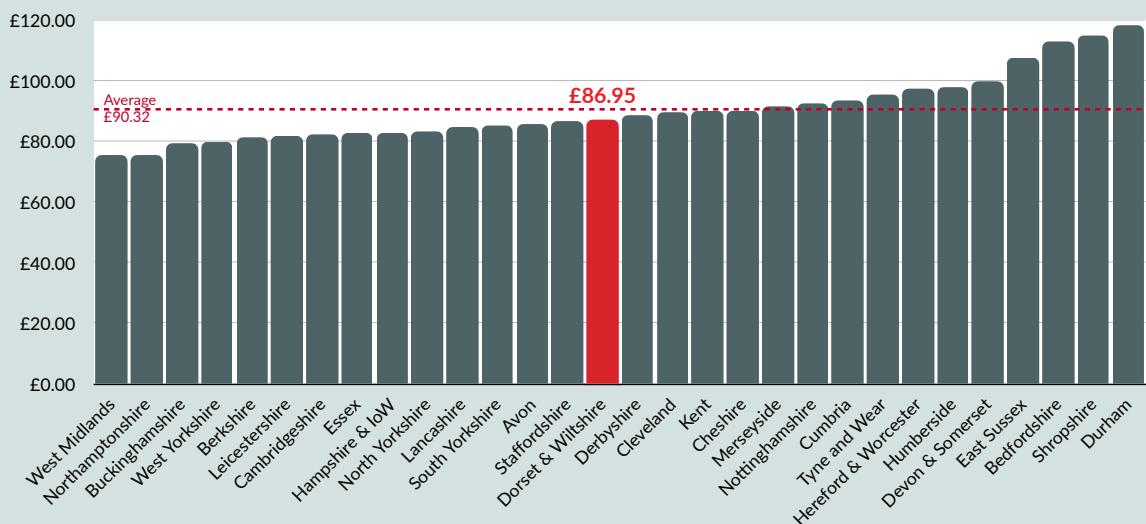
The Service still has significant financial challenges ahead, which is highlighted within our medium-term financial planning, if our share of central funding, council tax and business rates does not improve, or if the Authority does not deliver permanent annual revenue budget savings. A balanced budget position has been achieved for 2025-26, however, over the medium-term, deficits of **£1.38m** in 2026-27, **£1.51m** in 2027-28 and **£1.76m** in 2028-29 are forecast.



Service savings



Band D Council Tax charges for 2024-25



Costs to the Service have increased significantly, and the Authority now faces some difficult decisions to achieve a sustainable budget and medium-term financial plan. We are committed to delivering further savings and efficiencies in alignment to our strategic objectives within the Community Safety Plan (CSP).

The approved capital programme for 2024-25 totalled **£14m**, and will be used to:



Invest in our training facilities,



maintaining our fire stations and other buildings,



replace older vehicles and associated equipment and



ensure our ICT equipment and information systems remain appropriate and secure.

Compared to the national average cost of **£26.96**, our firefighter costs continue to be lower, with the latest data confirming a cost per 1,000 population of **£23.15**.

Our 'What we spend' ([www.dwfire.org.uk/what-we-spend](http://www.dwfire.org.uk/what-we-spend)) section on our website provides more information on our financial planning and performance, including our approach to efficiency and value for money.

We proudly hold the International Standard 45001 for Occupational Health and Safety and International Standard 55001 for Asset Management. This requires the British Standards Institution to visit and audit us twice each year, for each standard, to ensure continued compliance.

Our digital and data teams have continued to enhance the organisation's use of technology to streamline and automate processes, strengthen data connectivity and management, and support more efficient operations and informed decision-making. Whilst there is a cost associated with technology and innovation, the efficiencies realised from these improvements provide non-cashable savings for us in terms of productivity. This has been underpinned by a strong focus on maintaining the necessary infrastructure, security, and governance to meet legislative requirements and align with best practice standards.

# £ GOVERNANCE: Making every penny count

## Summary

### This work has led to:

- Our Service being rated as 'Good' by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, for making best use of resources and making the FRS affordable now and in the future.
- 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 an efficient and effective Service.
- Improvements in our technology and infrastructure, enabling a more efficient and effective operational response, and strengthening our cyber resilience.
- Our Service delivering on commitments set out within our Environmental Sustainability Strategy and aligning with the Climate Change Act 2010. We have achieved a 12% CO<sub>2</sub>e (carbon tonnes equivalent) reduction over the last four years including a 2% reduction within the last 12 months.
- Our continued review of capital and revenue spending ensuring value for money, good governance and financial management.
- Delivery of the Fire Cover Review (FCR) which has led to better aligning our response services to changing risks and demands whilst maintaining financial stability.
- Our environmental commitment is supported and guided by reliable data and credible information.

## Summary

Looking ahead, we aim to:

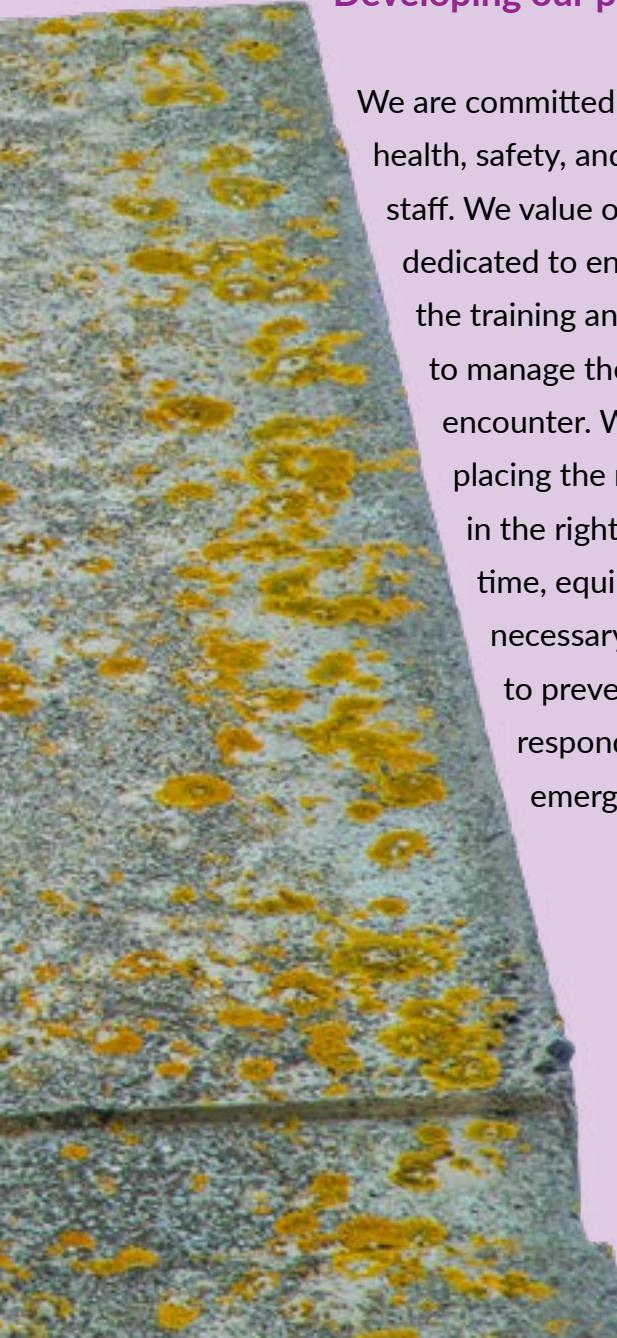
- Continue to deliver year on year savings to help us set a balanced budget.
- Continue to review all elements of our Capital Programme and how it is funded to ensure that it is affordable now and in the future.
- Continue to review all revenue and capital expenditure to ensure that value for money is maximised.
- Use our FCR to improve the alignment of our response to changing risks and demands. We will redesign our operational response and evaluate the efficiency of our stations. This will also have to be whilst maintaining financial stability.
- Progress further with environmental projects and carbon savings across our estate.
- Continue to deliver the work within our Data, Digital and Technology Strategy with a particular focus on the use of Artificial Intelligence as a means of finding efficiencies and improved ways of working.
- Continue with the proactive work in cyber security to ensure we are in a strong position to reduce the risk and significant impact of a cyber incident on our resources, both financially and capacity.
- Develop further our estate rationalisation programme.



## PEOPLE: Supporting and developing our people



## Developing our people



We are committed to prioritising the health, safety, and wellbeing of our staff. We value our people and are dedicated to ensuring they receive the training and support needed to manage the risks they may encounter. We are focused on placing the right individuals, in the right roles, at the right time, equipped with the necessary skills and tools, to prevent incidents and respond effectively when emergencies arise.

### Workforce and succession planning

We have strong workforce and succession planning processes to support every stage of employment. Each year, our Heads of Department complete succession plans, where we monitor retirement profiles, promotions and transfers. This helps us to make good and timely decisions about staff recruitment and progression, ensuring we recruit, train, develop, and keep talented staff, so we can continue to support the delivery of training across the Service.

### Staff safety and competence

The safety and competence of our workforce are very important to us. Staff are properly trained to deal with the risks they might face. We have continued to develop our incident commanders and

introduce technology to support them.

For example, we continue to invest in simulation training tools that allow incident commanders to practice their command and decision-making skills in an immersive training environment, replicating realistic life scenarios.

We also use body-worn cameras which enables our incident commanders to submit footage for personal development assessments and as part of our operational assurance activities.

Various exercises, as mentioned in the Response section of this report, are held across the Service so that commanders can practice and develop their command and leadership skills whilst we test our operational procedures.



## PEOPLE: Supporting and developing our people

Our digital learning team design training materials that are engaging, easy to access, and meet the needs of our neurodiverse workforce. These are held on and accessed via our Learning Hub and Learning Management System, ensuring that all staff have the resources to maintain the skills they need to do their jobs well.

### Leadership and management training

We provide extensive leadership and management training focused on the Code of Ethics and National Fire Chiefs Council Leadership Behaviours.

To build and enhance leadership skills, all staff can attend various courses offered as part of our development pathway. This includes:

- Leadership in Lifesaving.
- Management in Lifesaving.
- Trainer Assessor.

These courses are delivered by our Leadership, Management and Culture (LMC) Trainers who are existing Watch Manager role models. The LMC trainers also deliver our Not on My Watch sessions to ensure our staff continue to work in alignment with our Code of Ethics.

We also offer:

- Executive Leadership Programme for strategic leaders.
- Colourworks personality profiles and team development workshops to support self-development and team effectiveness.
- Positive action campaigns and initiatives further support underrepresented groups.

Our Bitesized Leaders Forum and Managers' Briefing Days allow managers to meet, share ideas, and learn about important topics.



## Apprenticeships and staff development

Our development pathways support all staff and help us build future leaders. In doing this, we seek to optimise the apprenticeship levy whilst developing our staff. In the last year:

**10**

staff completed apprenticeships, with nine achieving distinctions and one achieving a merit.

**25**

staff are currently undertaking apprenticeships, from Level 2 to Level 7.

Apprenticeships include Autocare Technician, Fire Safety Advisor, Associate Project Manager, Data Analyst, and Chartered Manager Degree. These programmes develop skills, support career growth, and help us retain talented people.

In addition, staff can also attend external training, conferences and seminars, relevant to their role, to further enhance their skills supported by our succession planning and Further Education, Apprenticeships, Seminars and Training (FEAST) panel processes.

## Operational training and celebrations

We host an annual Passing Out Parade at Salisbury Fire Station to celebrate the success of our on-call and control firefighters. The event recognises their hard work and skills, with certificates presented by the Chief Fire Officer. This year guests included the High Sheriffs and Lord Lieutenants of Dorset and Wiltshire, Fire Authority Members, senior leaders and most importantly family members of those staff whose achievements we celebrated.

Our Operational Training Teams deliver essential courses in Basic Skills, Breathing Apparatus (BA), Road Traffic Collision (RTC) rescue, and Casualty Care. We also maintain the competence of existing staff through regular revalidations and refreshers.

We have introduced new practices like Tactical Ventilation, which is the use of fans to control smoke and fires within buildings. More recently our instructors trained operational staff on the use of smoke curtains, this equipment provides additional tools for dealing with fires in high rise buildings. New approaches such as these are aimed at reducing fire damage and also ensure members of the public are safely evacuated should they have a fire in their home.



## PEOPLE: Supporting and developing our people

Our instructors designed, developed and published a Breathing Apparatus manual to help standardise procedures across the Service, and our Road Traffic Collision (RTC) Instructors Course was verified and accredited by Skills for Justice. This enables the Service to train RTC instructors 'in house' providing cost savings whilst delivering courses to a high standard, tailored to our own operational needs. It also provides a comprehensive reference document to ensure our firefighters maintain high standards of competence and safety.

We continue to provide blue light driver training and assessment to firefighters and officers. Recently our driver trainers trained staff in the use of new Welfare Units and new UNIMOG wildfire vehicles.

### Training development and standards

We continue to improve the quality of operational training and have:

- Created new learning materials that align with National Operational Guidance (NOG).
- Ensured local operational guidance matches national standards.
- Continue to use a mix of learning methods to make training flexible and effective.
- Coordinate the training element for our Service Control Centre and that of Hampshire & the Isle of Wight, Devon & Somerset, and Kent.
- Taken the lead in the Southwest for the implementation of new National Operational Guidance and represent the region nationally on this subject.
- Shared our innovative approach to the implementation of National Operational Guidance that has quickly gained recognition within the fire and rescue sector.

### Specialist training and joint exercises

Specialist training in hazardous materials has been delivered, alongside assessments and joint exercises with partners such as the Ministry of Defence and Bournemouth University. One example is Exercise Armour, a joint military training event held at Bovington, Dorset. We organised and participated in joint firefighter and paramedic training for road traffic collision scenarios.

Our exercise theme for this year was 'Fires in Tall Buildings' which means that our firefighters, who are most likely to attend these types of incidents, have participated in practical exercises aimed at solidifying our procedures and approach to this type of fire incident.

### Recognising achievements

We celebrate the achievements of our staff through an annual awards ceremony, which includes long service medals, commendations, and apprentice achievements.

Staff can also recognise excellent work through our 121 system, which allows positive feedback for those who go above and beyond.





## PEOPLE: Supporting and developing our people





## Staff wellbeing

We prioritise the health and wellbeing of all our staff by offering a comprehensive range of physical, emotional, and mental health services. Our dedicated health and wellbeing team collaborates closely with line managers and our Human Resources People Partners to ensure a holistic approach to staff support.

### Physical wellbeing

To ensure operational staff maintain optimal fitness, all stations are equipped with appropriate fitness equipment. They are supported by health and fitness advisers, as well as a network of physical training instructors. As part of our commitment to proactive care, we also provide physiotherapy treatments to prevent musculoskeletal issues and support recovery.





# PEOPLE: Supporting and developing our people

## Mental health and emotional wellbeing

Mental health absences are thoughtfully managed by our Service. We actively promote participation in free preventative Wellness Workshops provided by the Firefighters Charity and other providers. These workshops empower staff to lead healthier and happier lives. Introduced in March 2024, the Service works with a private healthcare scheme to offer enhanced benefits to staff and dependants through salary deduction, offering another opportunity for staff to enhance their wellbeing.

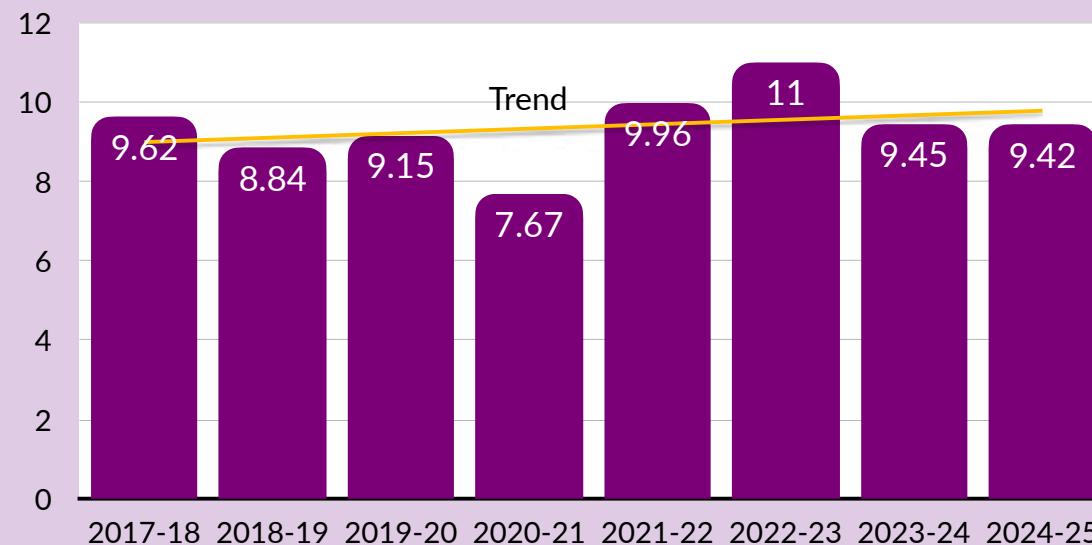
## Managing sickness absence

Sickness absence remains a key focus for the Service and we continually strive to improve average sickness levels. The target of under 9.45 shifts lost per person for 2024-25 was achieved, with an actual figure of 9.42. This also represents an improvement compared to 2023-24, where 9.45 shifts were lost. Long-term analysis, however, reveals increasing average sickness

levels, which underscores the significance of our ongoing commitment to appropriate absence management and staff support.

We have a range of health and wellbeing procedures designed to offer robust support mechanisms to all employees. These include physiotherapy, counselling, and other external self-service provisions aimed at promoting wellbeing and recovery.

Average number of shifts lost to sickness





Specsavers

SAFETY  
OFFICER

8



## PEOPLE: Supporting and developing our people



## Managing Performance

The Service has performance management procedures (including Discipline, Grievance, Bullying and Harassment and Managing Performance) in place to support and encourage members of staff to achieve and maintain the expected standards of conduct and behaviour.

Our discipline procedure, and associated process, has undergone a review this year to further strengthen our approach to formal case management. This has been well monitored to ensure that learning



from post case reviews, and feedback, is being incorporated to further enhance arrangements. Significant changes this year have included:

- Introducing a two-step assessment process to provide improved scrutiny and to give increased accountability to managers.
- A review of the suspension process and approach, to ensure it supports all staff.
- Improved transparency of outcomes, to help promote trust, fairness and accountability.

We are committed to reducing the time taken for investigations and associated disciplinary hearings. To support this we have introduced a Professional Standards Team which will improve the way we manage our discipline cases. Additional training has been provided for officers to support a more effective and efficient, people focused approach.



## PEOPLE: Supporting and developing our people



## Equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality, diversity, and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do, and we are committed to making a real difference to the lives of people in Dorset and Wiltshire. Supporting our staff and colleagues is key to this.

### Code of ethics

The psychological safety and wellbeing of our colleagues is a priority. Our internal 'Safe To' programme provides information, advice and guidance that empowers our staff to be their best and authentic self at work. We also have a Culture Dashboard on our intranet, which is available to all staff and includes information on the types of discipline cases investigated along with anonymised outcomes to strengthen transparency and maintain trust.



The Service has been continuing to help colleagues understand how they apply ethical principles into their everyday working, supporting us to provide an inclusive organisation without discrimination or inappropriate behaviours. In support of this the Service has embedded our Code of Ethics throughout our numerous practices, including how we attract applicants, and the recognition, support and development of our colleagues.

### Community engagement

We are keen to learn from the people we serve and understand that our community engagement activities are integral in helping us better understand everyone's needs better. We continue to work with partners in 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, we continue to strive to build a more diverse workforce. To help us with our journey, we use positive action initiatives to invite, employ, retain and progress groups of people who are underrepresented in our Service area. Women, people from a minority ethnic background and LGBTQ+ people are



## PEOPLE: Supporting and developing our people

underrepresented in our Service, compared to our communities. We undertake activities to invite and employ these groups of people such as tailored advertising, inclusive information on our website, targeted community events and opportunities, through recruitment, for potential applicants to try operational activities, whilst maintaining the same standard of entry for all. Our Buddy Scheme and Buddy Me Days over this year attracted over 50 potential applicants who were women, from a minority ethnic background and/or LGBTQ+ people.

The Service is keen to keep and progress those from underrepresented groups, in support of this we have a number of staff networks and support groups, inclusive procedures, corporate memberships and

bespoke development opportunities. As we entered the third year of our accreditation with White Ribbon, we continue with the delivery of our personal safety workshops. Through this we have improved maternity and maternity support provision, which inspired the launch of a Men's Support Network, who have had a focus on fatherhood, allyship, mental health and wellbeing.

This year we introduced our Developing Diverse Leaders Programme, which included external coaches with unique and exemplary lived experiences, to inspire and help six Service colleagues who are underrepresented, to recognise their value and potential in senior management and leadership.

All this and much more has been initiated and progressed as part of our Culture Action Plan, along with building our Culture Assurance Framework supported by an independent Professor for organisational psychology. This framework has helped us ensure that the changes we make are effective, meaningful for our colleagues and without bias.

We also proactively approach community groups, and community leaders to encourage them to invite us to their events using our community engagement requests form ([www.dwfire.org.uk/community-engagement-requests](http://www.dwfire.org.uk/community-engagement-requests)). For more information, including our approach, objectives and Annual Workforce Equality Report, please visit our website [www.dwfire.org.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion](http://www.dwfire.org.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion).

## Summary

### This work has led to:

- A good understanding of our workforce profile which supports succession planning and talent management.
- Well trained and competent staff whose physical and emotional wellbeing is prioritised.
- Investing in the leadership development of our staff, ensuring they are equipped with the skills and behaviours to succeed in their role.
- Increased staff confidence in the health and wellbeing arrangements in place, with low sickness absence.
- A more diverse workforce that can better serve the community.
- Increased levels of staff belonging and psychological safety.
- The successes if our staff are recognised and celebrated.

### Looking ahead, we aim to:

- Continue investment in Leadership Development programmes and coaching support to develop our future leaders.
- Continuing to look at ways to support and strengthen the physical and emotional wellbeing of our staff.
- Continuing to strengthen and embed positive action so we can attract, recruit retain and progress a diverse workforce that 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.
- Continue to role model and embed the code of ethics.
- React dynamically to the needs of our staff and deliver against the culture action delivery plan.

# COULD YOU BE AN ON-CALL FIREFIGHTER?

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

On-call firefighters are paid professionals, who do the same work as their wholetime colleagues. Unlike wholetime firefighters, they are not based at the fire station but have other jobs and commitments, responding to emergencies only when their alerter goes off.

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).



# STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE

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.	18% reduction
We will aim for our response times to road traffic collisions to be under 15 minutes.	Achieved
We will reduce the number of deliberate fires, compared to the average attended during the last five years.	2.5% increase
We will audit 100% of all buildings identified in our risk based inspection programme.	Achieved
We will achieve a reduction in our attendance at unwanted fire automatic fire alarms, compared to the average attended during the last five years.	11% reduction
We will achieve a ten minute response time for the first appliance in attendance at confirmed fires in sleeping risk properties. This includes call handling, turn out and travel time.	Almost achieved
We will achieve a reduction in the average sickness levels, compared to the average during the last five years.	Achieved
We will improve the diversity of our workforce as a whole, compared to the last five years.	1.7% above target
We will reduce the number of working days lost to work related physical injuries and ill health, compared to the average during the last five years.	8.3% increase
We will reduce CO2 emissions across our electricity and gas consumption, compared to the average during the last five years.	10% under target

Key █ Target achieved

█ Working towards target

█ Target not achieved

# CONTACT US



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