DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE

Annual Report
2025-26

PASSIONATE ABOUT
CHANGING & SAVING LIVES

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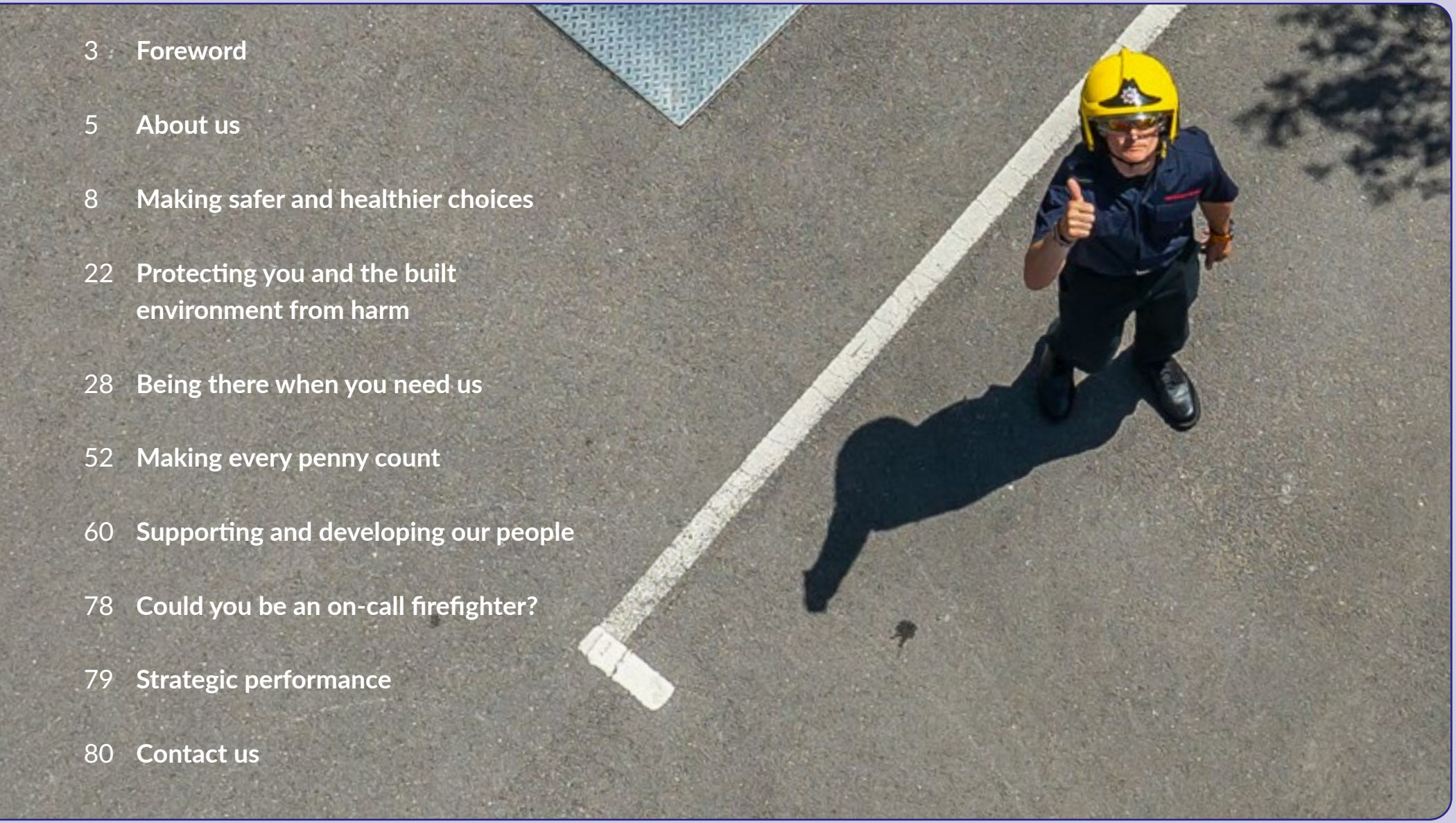

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FOREWORD

Cllr Clare Weight
Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority

Andy Cole QFSM
Chief Fire Officer

The past year has been an exceptionally busy year across our Service, operating in an environment that continues to evolve rapidly. Alongside our day-to-day demands, we've had to navigate a range of emerging pressures, from the impacts being felt by climate change, increasing cyber-security threats, volatility in the economy, and impacts from changing global politics.

Up until March 2026, exceptionally hot and dry conditions led to a large spike in the number of fires in the open, including heath fires, fields and standing crops. We dealt with 3654 of these types of fire, which was almost as busy as 2022. This was coupled with civil unrest incidents, including protests and counter protests over immigration issues.

During 2025-26 our Service Control Centre handled 36,354 emergency calls, leading to 14,515 incident responses across our area. These included 154 rescues from fires, and 466 people assisted following road traffic collisions. Responding when people need us most remains at the heart of what we do, but it's only one part of our role.

A significant amount of our effort goes into preventing emergencies before they occur. Working closely with residents, partners and community groups, we aim to reduce risk and help people stay safe in their homes. Through our Home Fire Safety programme, we carried out 7,064 visits to support vulnerable members of our community with tailored safety advice and essential equipment.

Our teams also help reduce danger by installing smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors and other safety devices, as well as delivering road safety education. Initiatives such as 'Go Drive' give people — particularly younger drivers — the knowledge and confidence to make safer choices on our roads.

Our fire safety department has continued its work to support businesses and enforce safety standards. Over the past year, the team completed 743 fire safety audits, provided guidance through 563 licensing consultations, and responded to 1,845 building control consultations.

FOREWORD

Where necessary, we took formal action to keep people safe, issuing 21 enforcement notices and 26 prohibition notices and one prosecution. Our operational crews also played a key role, carrying out 692 fire safety checks in local premises to help ensure legal requirements were met.

Throughout 2025-26, we have also continued to drive forward improvements through our Culture Action Plan, which aims to strengthen how we work together and ensure our organisation reflects the values our communities expect. Progress is being closely monitored. Strong governance arrangements help maintain both transparency and momentum. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) visited to view our progress and provided positive feedback on the work achieved so far and we look forward to receiving their views after their September re-inspection.

We continue to operate within a challenging financial environment, having already delivered over £15m in annual savings since combination to support long-term sustainability. Despite this progress, further financial pressures remain. We began 2026-27 with a budget gap of £1.2m, requiring continued focus on efficiency and transformation.

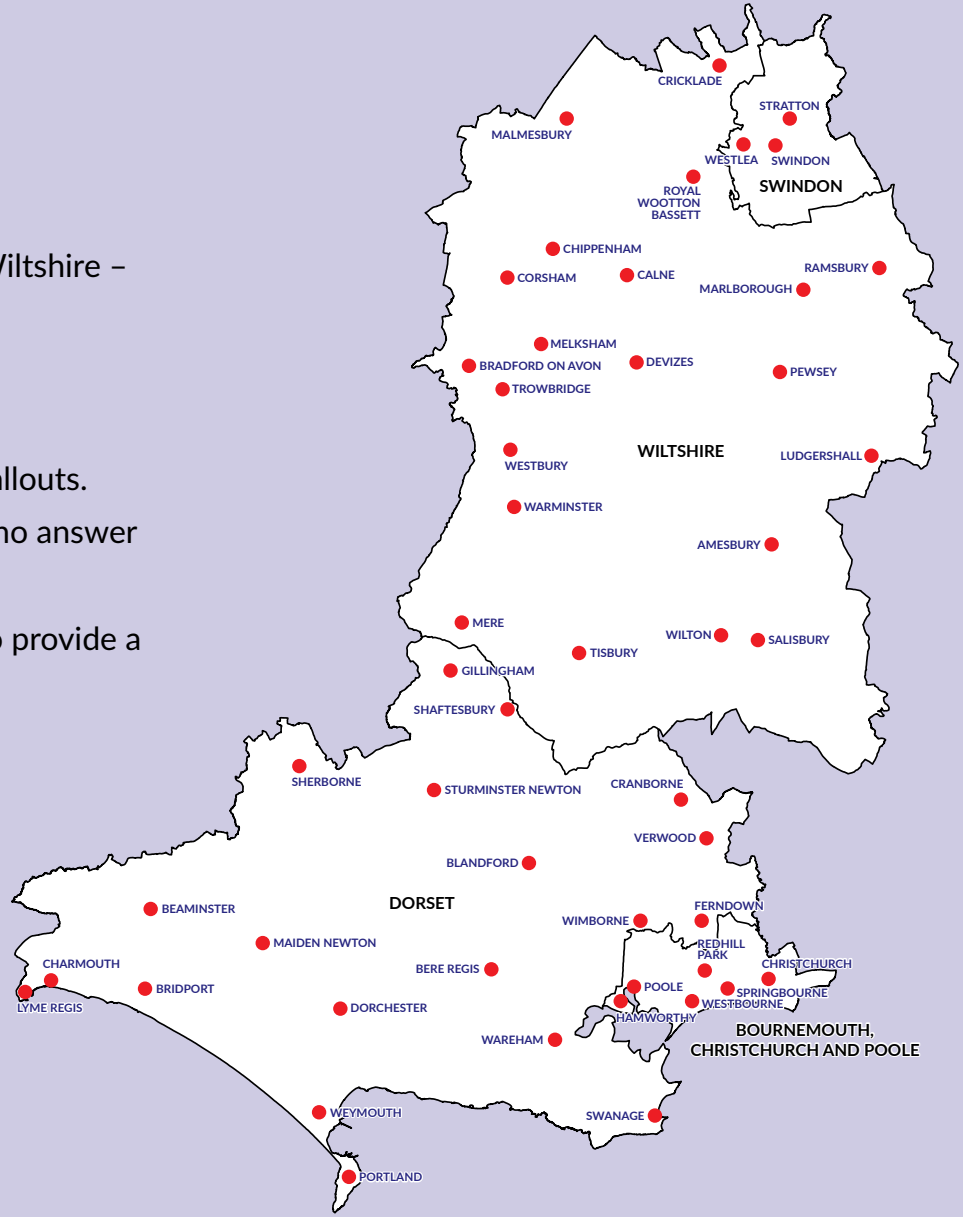
In response to these ongoing challenges, the Fire Authority commenced a public consultation in February 2026 considering the potential change in status of up to eight fire stations. This work will continue throughout 2026-27 and beyond through our modernisation programme, alongside sustained engagement with elected members and stakeholders regarding our ongoing financial position and the steps required to ensure long-term resilience and sustainability.

This Annual Report highlights the key work we've carried out over the past year and how we've performed as a Service. Whilst the Service is facing challenges we will ensure our staff are kept engaged, informed and supported to help us successfully navigate through the change and continue to deliver a Service that we are proud of.

If you'd like to learn more about what we do or read our **Community Safety Plan**, further information and our contact details are available on our website.

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.
- Delivers these services through a fantastic team of:
  - On-call firefighters who make themselves available for emergency callouts.
  - Wholetime firefighters, including those based in our control room who answer 999 emergency calls, 24 hours a day, every day of the year.
  - Vehicle technicians, equipment technicians, and ICT technicians who provide a 24/7 service.
  - Corporate staff who enable our essential front-line services.
- 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.



ABOUT THIS ANNUAL REPORT

Your fire and rescue service is more than emergency response – that is just one part of what we do. To guide our work and make the best use of public finances, we focus on our five key priorities. These ensure we focus on 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 have performed over the past year in delivering on those priorities.

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

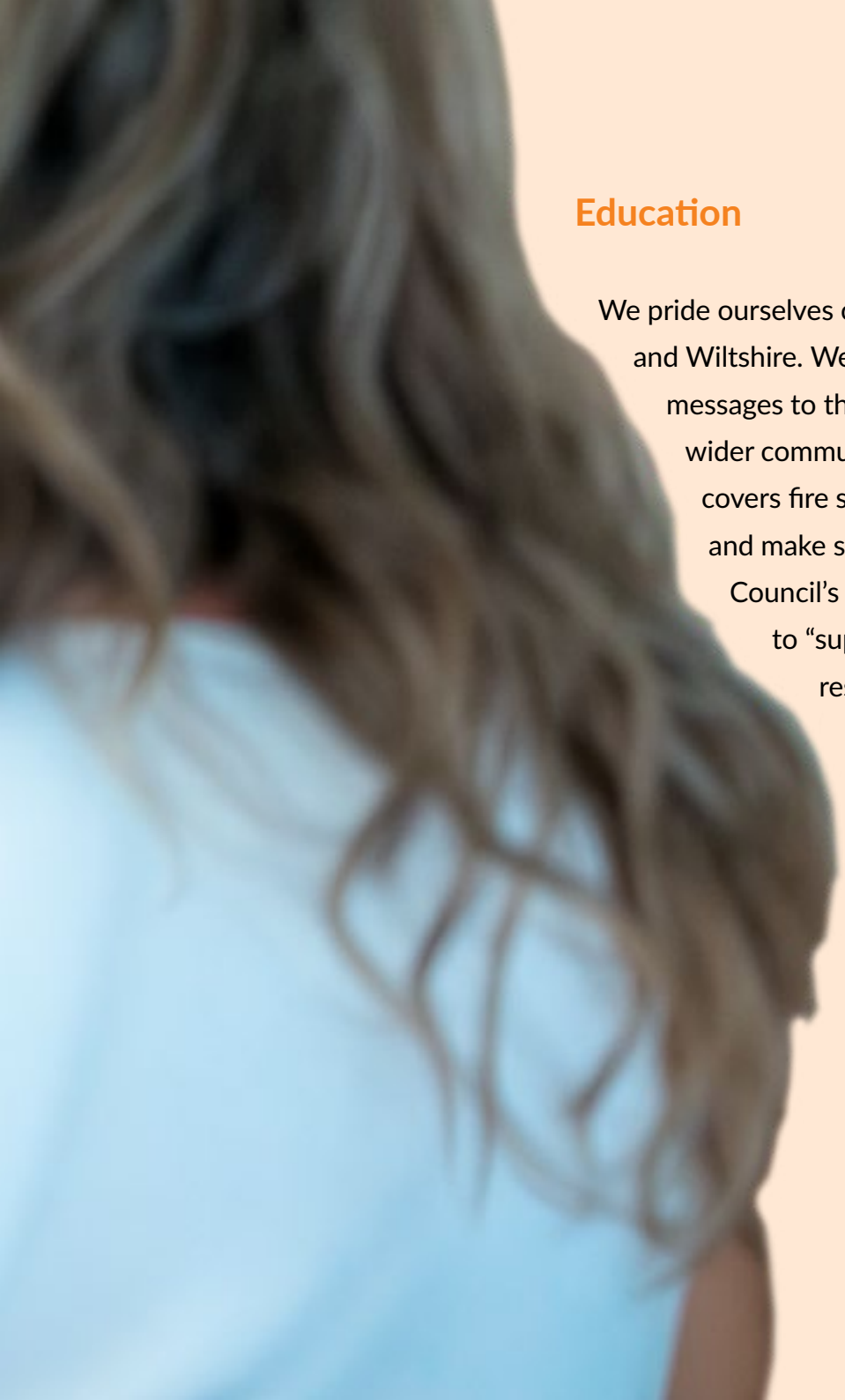
It is important we are well managed and that we spend our budget wisely and maximise what we do with it.

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.

PREVENTION Making safer and healthier choices



Education

49,336
children received safety messages

We pride ourselves on making a difference to the lives of children within Dorset and Wiltshire. We hope that by providing bespoke, age-appropriate safety messages to them we will help keep them, those they live with and the wider community, safer in their homes. Our safety education not only covers fire safety, but we support other key partners' messages too, and make sure our campaigns are linked to the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) themes. At the heart of our delivery, we strive to "support all children and young people to be safe, healthy, resilient and active participants in the community".

Our key messages are centred around:

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

PREVENTION Making safer and healthier choices

We also make sure all education captures:

- How to make a 999 call, in an emergency situation.
- The impact and consequences of anti-social behaviour, hoax calls, deliberately setting fires, and when playing with fire goes wrong.
- Practical strategies for young people to help make positive life choices.
- The essence of being a Firefighter, helping children to see them as positive role models who are healthy and fit people who enjoy their jobs supporting the community.

Our education is targeted at schools based on risk from fire. We analyse data to create our approach which includes:

- Local fire incident data.
- School's proximity to their local fire station.
- Socio-economic data for the area.
- Number of dwelling fires where children have been present.

We've supported two schools this year following pupils' inappropriate behaviour in relation to tampering with their internal fire detection and firefighting equipment. Fire points and extinguishers play an important role in alerting the whole school community if there was a fire, and when these are damaged or set off when not required, it can cause unnecessary use of our resources. We've been able to support the schools with additional education to the children, highlighting the importance of such equipment.

We communicate with schools regularly and ask them to pass on key safety messages to parents and carers. At the start of warmer weather last year, we sent reminders highlighting the dangers of portable BBQs and campfires in dry seasons, open water safety and sun protection information too.

This is in addition to the information we supplied following our education delivery within a school.

We host days for home educated children at local fire stations. These provide us with an opportunity to educate the children on all the safety messages that we provide in schools, as well as help build trusting, healthy relationships with the crews on stations.

Children's groups, such as Guides and Scouts, continue to arrange visits with their local fire station, if local resources allow. These continue to be arranged via our website or this **link**.

PREVENTION Making safer and healthier choices

Fire safety intervention

We have supported 67 children this year and have received 53 new referrals for our Fire Safety Intervention programme. It is designed to engage with children and young people who have shown an interest in fire setting, started playing with fire or have a fear of fire. Our early intervention can help them to understand the consequences and impact fires can have.

Impact to wider society:

School education

We have delivered education to 49,336 children either in their educational setting, or at fire stations. We continue to focus on positive behaviour change, which we believe helps to build confidence and trust. Children then have the ability and knowledge to help influence behaviours within their home. This can lead to smoke detectors being tested, helping not to overload sockets and preventing the charging of electrical products at night.

Our specially trained team of advisors work in pairs to support a child and their family. We encourage visits to be hosted in the home but can also undertake the education and support in a school setting too.
We can receive referrals from parents or carers, as well as professionals who work with the child, such as:

67
fire safety interventions

- Children's Services
- Police
- Teachers
- Youth Justice Service

His Majesty's Prison (HMP) Guys Marsh reached out to us, asking us to consider providing education to people in prison who had an index offense of arson, or had set cell fires, we agreed to run a pilot of Firesetters Integrated Response Education – Programme (FIRE-P).

Four prisoners successfully completed the eight-week programme, which looked at:

- Mechanics of fire.
- Motives for deliberate firesetting.
- Human behaviour and fire.
- Consequences of deliberate firesetting, including their ripple effect.
- Repairing the harm.

We worked collaboratively with the individual to identify an action plan for the next five years, looking at the positive benefits this would bring. Positive feedback from the individuals was received, along with them demonstrating a greater understanding and appreciation of the impact arson behaviour can have on victims, the wider community and emergency services.

Impact to wider society:

School education

We've worked in collaboration with Dorset Heath Partnership (DHP) and provided funding to support their FireWise Assistant post. We've identified in our Strategic Assessment of Risk that wildfire remains high risk and we experienced a particularly busy period for wildfires this year, similar in scale to the summer of 2022. We have continued to support DHPs approach to education for people of all ages, including social media messaging. We've supported schools who are within close proximity of heathland with additional education around heath fires and their consequences. We provide a visible presence at times of higher-fire risk to engage with the public. Our volunteers also support patrolling the heaths, along with K9 walkers who are signed up through DHP.

PREVENTION Making safer and healthier choices

Home visits

We are proud to have carried out 7,064 home fire safety visits. It's a privilege that people invite us into their homes to support them with bespoke education and information. Our main aim is to identify fire risks and lifestyle behaviours that may contribute to the risk, along with helping the household to take appropriate risk-reducing actions. We're able to provide smoke, heat and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors, but influencing behaviour change is essential, as 60% of accidental dwelling fires occur in the kitchen. 45% of households attended were fitted with new smoke alarms, providing an important early warning system to alert occupants to potential fire incidents and support timely action in an emergency.

Through our visits, 17% identified the support requirements of other agencies and we made appropriate referrals to local authorities, NHS or Police, for example.

There will always be occasions when we're unable to provide information within a private home, however we will always make the effort to support them in whatever way they'd prefer and feels suitable for their needs. We've supported 1,032 homes by providing advice either on the doorstep, over the phone or through literature posted to them. This totals almost 8,100 homes supported with fire safety advice.

We've created a new risk-based approach to our visits, which helps us prioritise those most at risk of fire. We have received 7,076 referrals from our partners, across 25 different organisations, including charities, housing, NHS, Police and utility suppliers.

PREVENTION Making safer and healthier choices

Impact to wider society:

We hosted a hoarding conference with the support of Hoarders Helping Hoarders. We wanted to highlight the importance of collaboratively working when trying to support people at risk of hoarding behaviour or self-neglect. Partners from all sectors supported the event with learning across both the public and charity sector.

We have an excellent working relationship with SGN, and Wales and West Utility who have provided us with £55,437 of funding for CO detectors. This has funded 5,000 standard detectors, and 250 detectors for people who have a hearing impairment. Since we began our partnership, we have received nearly £180,000 of funding. During our visits we also provide information on the signs and symptoms of CO poisoning.

Using our accidental dwelling fire and fire fatality data we pro-actively target specific groups within our communities. Using local knowledge, supported by this data, our firefighter identifies where those most at risk of fire may spend time and provide resources to the establishments. We engage with proprietors and encourage them to provide information if someone meets our criteria. Drinks mats have been created so individuals can self-refer if they'd like a visit.

We're also able to provide other resources including locking letterboxes for people who have experienced threats of arson, to fire retardant products for those who pose a greater risk due to smoking. Referrals are largely received from utility companies, South West Ambulance and Air Liquide.

Over the last year we've provided 21 letter box blockers and 40 fire retardant doormats. Whilst smoking continues to be a significant risk factor in fire fatalities, we have provided 73 sets of fire retardant bedding and 74 ashtrays to help lower the risk.

Multi-agency prevention:

As a specified authority within the Serious Violence Duty, we regularly work with partners to agree Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA), grant funding and monitor the data behind the SNA. We've also helped run key programmes to work with young people who may be vulnerable. The Synergy Programme in Swindon and Wiltshire has been helping create better relationships with emergency services and referrals from the Youth Justice Service. Skills for Safer Streets in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council area has been helping young people who are diverted to local gyms, following a day of martial arts interactive learning, knife and first aid education.

We continue to be an active member of the Community Safety Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board, as well as attend various subgroups throughout the area, such as self-neglect and high harm perpetrator panels.

PREVENTION Making safer and healthier choices

Road safety

We attended 695 road traffic collisions and carried out 466 rescues. We take a collaborative approach to road safety, ensuring we work with Dorset Road Safe and Wiltshire and Swindon Road Safety Partnerships.

We're in the second year of our 'Go Drive' delivery model, which has moved to a trauma informed approach, 'aligning with the NFCCs guidance, and academically evaluated. Our role in the road safety partnerships is to support those young drivers, and their passengers at a crucial development stage of their lives. We focus on the messages of the fatal four: speeding, drink/ drug driving, using a mobile phone and not wearing a seat belt. We have provided 'Go Drive' education to 6,513 young people, at 72 different schools, during 92 individual sessions.

PREVENTION Making safer and healthier choices

We also deliver Biker Down events in the Swindon area and support the delivery by Doc Bike in Dorset by supplying a venue for delivery.

We support community safety events, which attract a wide range of community members, this year we have attended 14 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.

92 'Go Drive' events, at 72 schools, with 6,513 attendees.

1 Calne Bike meet.

1 Biker Down event with 14 attendees.

14 Community events.

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.
- Increased education relating to the consequences of deliberate fire setting.
- 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.
- Supporting multi-agencies to reduce serious violence.

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.
- Continue to assess current and emerging risks and target preventative measures.
- 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.
- Supporting vulnerable people who need assistance under new Residential Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan guidance.

PROTECTION Protecting you and the built environment from harm

743
fire safety audits

563
licensing consultations

1,845
building regulations consultations

7,501
positive engagements with businesses

692
business fire safety checks

21
enforcement notices issued

26
prohibition notices served

Fire safety

Our Fire Safety Inspectors deliver against our risk-based intervention programme and have completed 480 interventions of our current programme. They also respond to fire safety concerns from members of the public and partner agencies and take action to address non-compliance, as well as undertaking consultations with building control and licensing teams to promote fire safety in the built environment.

Our Business Support Advisors play a proactive role in engaging with businesses to provide education and advice to support compliance with legislative requirements.

PROTECTION Protecting you and the built environment from harm

The Fire Safety (Residential Evacuation Plans) (England) Regulations 2025 have been passed by government. These require building managers to identify vulnerable residents who may require assistance with evacuation in the event of a fire. The information is required to be shared with us and further builds on the requirements to share building related information under the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022. The overall effect of these regulations is to improve the safety of residents in high rise residential buildings. Our Protection and Operational Risk teams have developed systems to monitor compliance and enforce these regulations where necessary.

Our Building Safety Regulator (BSR) staff continue to carry out Building Assessment Certificate and Gateway two and three assessments under a revised governance structure, supported by national funding. This work helps deliver the government's response to the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. 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 692 fire safety checks, contributing to a total of 7,501 positive engagements with businesses.

We have taken formal action against businesses that failed to comply with the Fire Safety Order. In the past year, we issued 21 enforcement notices and 26 prohibition notices. Our Prosecution Team has successfully prosecuted a care home for failings in their fire safety management arrangements, which resulted in the death of a resident. Further legal proceedings against another organisation are currently progressing through the court system.

PROTECTION Protecting you and the built environment from harm

Fire safety concerns

We respond to fire safety concerns raised by the public and our partners. A total of 306 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.

Following the introduction of more robust call challenge procedures, and improvements to the consistency of follow up action by Protection and Prevention teams, the number of Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) activations we attend has been reduced. Attendance is still made to higher risk premises based on a range of criteria. By reducing the amount of AFA activations we attend we save money and ensure our resources are available for other emergencies.

For more information about business fire safety, including links to relevant guidance, please see our website **www.dwfire.org.uk/business-fire-safety**.

Summary

This work has led to:

- Reduced accidents, injuries and deaths.
- Improved self-compliance in fire safety law, resulting in workplaces and multi-occupied residential premises being safer.
- The number and impacts of unwanted fire alarms from commercial premises reducing. Achieved through improved procedures and call challenging, with advisory support.
- Collaborations and engagement with partners through updated Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) and information sharing to identify high risk fire safety concerns.

Looking ahead, we aim to:

- Ensure the continued delivery of our fire safety enforcement plan and Risk-Based Intervention Programme.
- Ensure that statutory requirements are complied with 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.

999 RESPONSE Being there when you need us

Emergency response

During 2025-26, we received 36,354 emergency calls, resulting in 14,515 incidents attended across Dorset and Wiltshire. The number of calls received is significantly higher than the number of incidents due to multiple calls relating to the same incident, and calls handled on behalf of partner agencies which may not result in a separate incident attendance by our crews. In addition to the above a process of effective call challenging and filtering contributes to the difference in figures. A growing number of incidents require us to support our partner agencies, for example in bariatric care or to enable their access.

Fire incidents remained a significant part of our operational activity, with 3,654 fires attended, including 872 deliberate fires. Of particular note this year, is the rise in accidental dwelling fires, with crews attending 746 accidental fires in the home, representing a 19.7% increase compared to the previous year. However, the long-term trend (over the last 10 years) continues to see a decrease in these types of fire. This reinforces the importance and value of our prevention and protection work alongside effective emergency response.

36,354
emergency calls received

14,515
incidents attended

3,654
fires attended (inc. 872 deliberate)

154
rescues from fires

746
accidental fires in the home attended

19.7%
increase in accidental dwelling fires

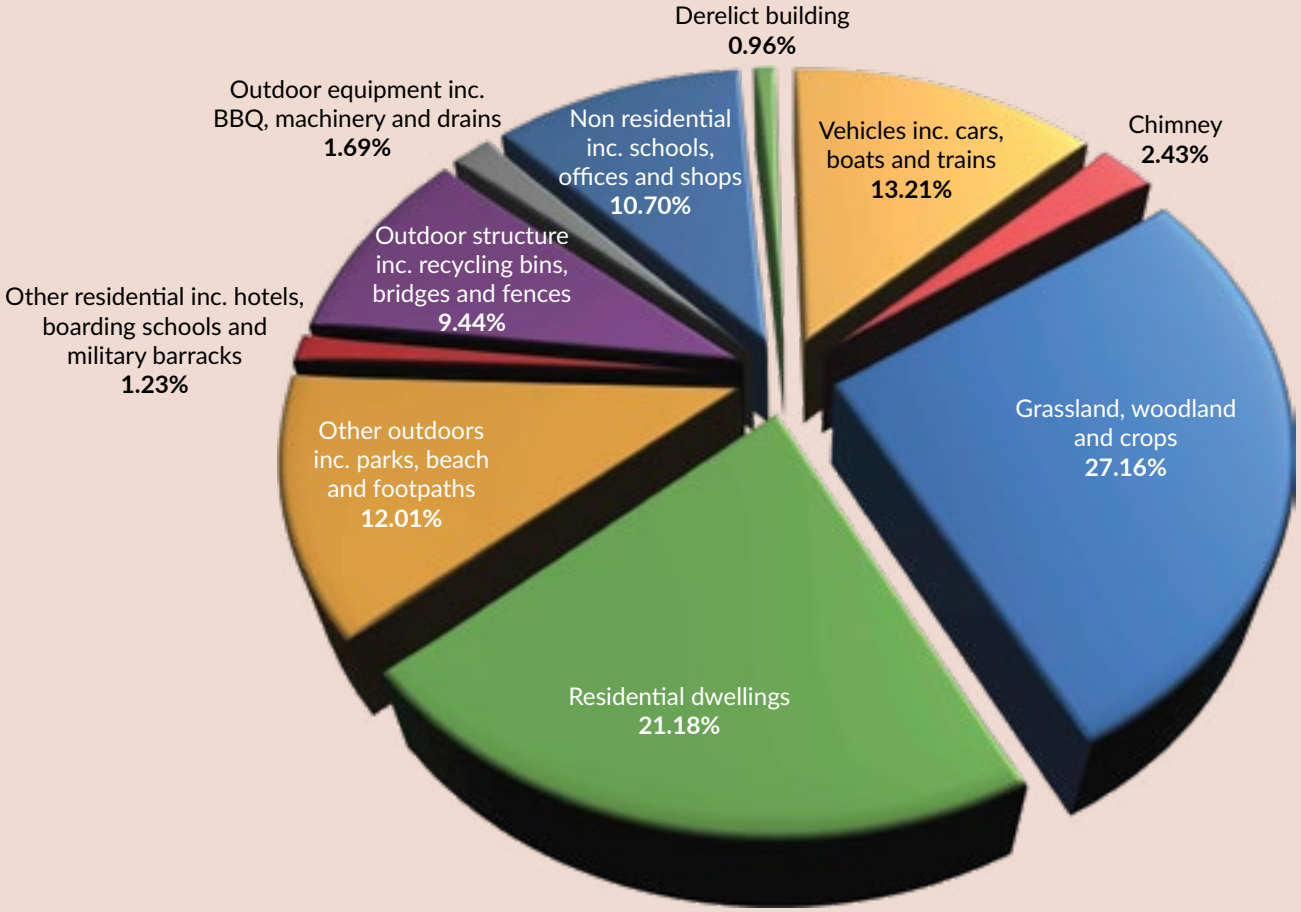
466
people rescued from road traffic collisions

999 RESPONSE Being there when you need us

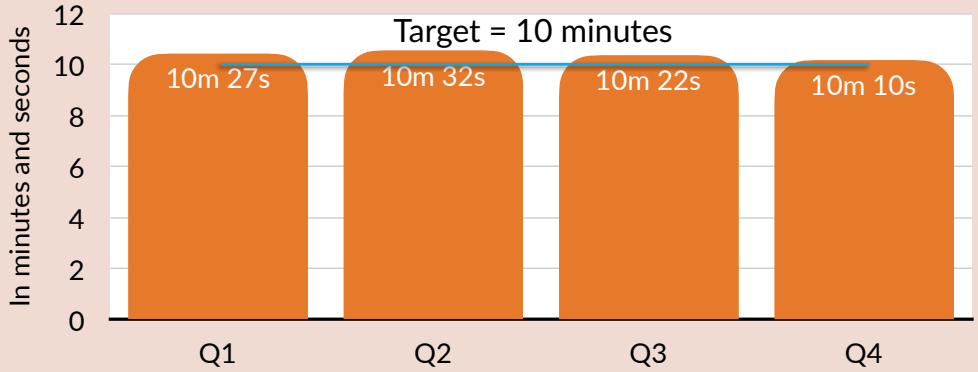
Our firefighters carried out 154 rescues from fires, demonstrating the life saving impact of rapid attendance and decisive operational actions. In addition, crews rescued 466 people from road traffic collisions, reflecting the volume of incidents attended on the road network and the specialist skills required to respond safely and effectively.

Together, these figures highlight the broad nature of the Service's role. They underline our commitment not only to responding swiftly when emergencies occur, but also to targeting prevention, partnership working, and community engagement to reduce risk and keep people safe.

Types of fire attended 2025-26

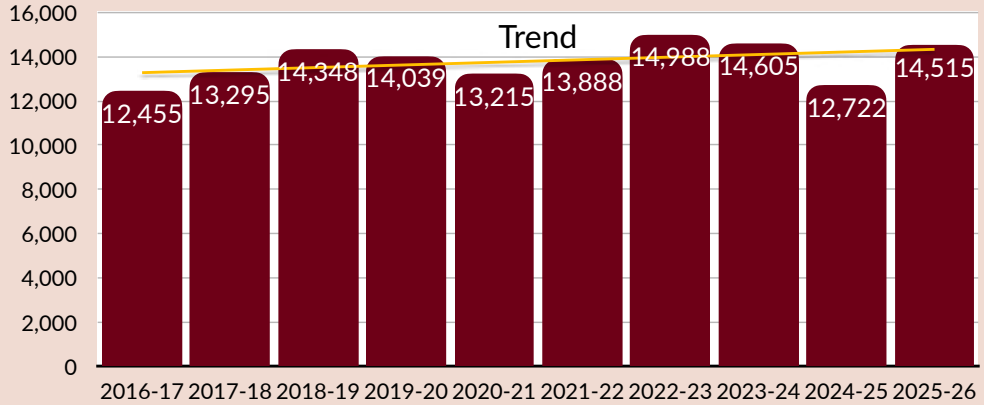


Average response time of first fire engine to sleeping risk properties

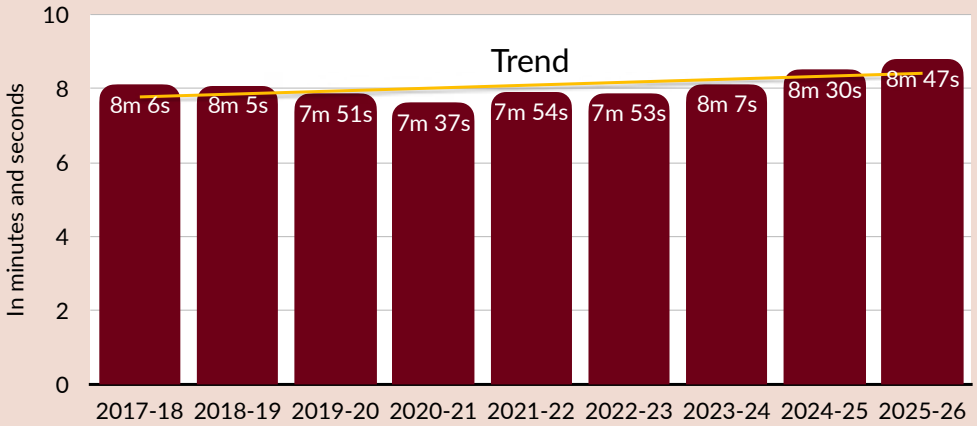


Long term trends

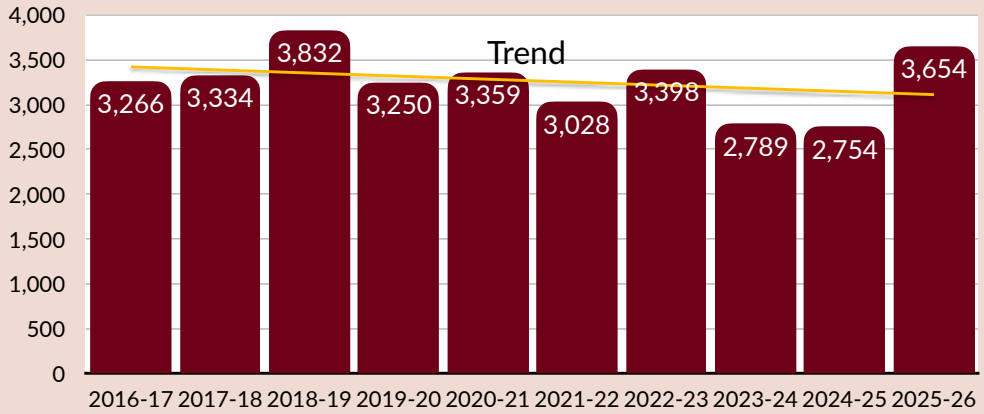
Number of incidents attended



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



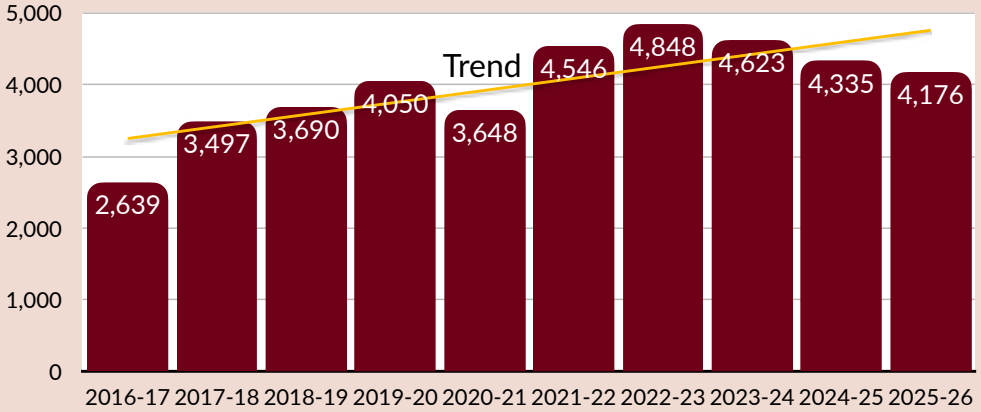
Number of fires attended



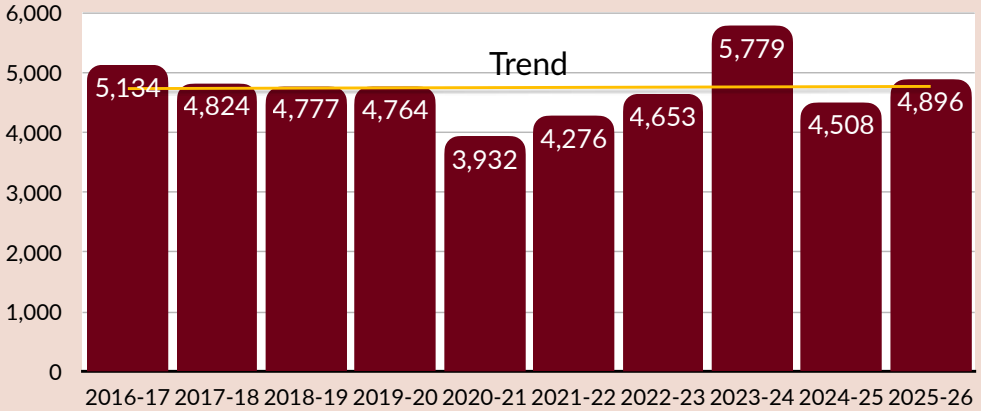
* An isochrone is the area reached within a 10 minute travel time from our fire stations. Factors such as traffic or poor weather conditions may affect our ability to achieve a 10 minute response time within these areas

999 RESPONSE Being there when you need us

Number of non-fire related incidents



Number of unwanted automatic fire alarms attended



Incidents

Throughout 2025–26, crews across Dorset and Wiltshire responded to a number of significant and complex incidents that tested our operational resilience, resource management and partnership working. Our crews and officers demonstrated their ability to function within a major incident, to operate in an inter-agency environment and ensure the community received the best service possible. These incidents not only demonstrated the professionalism and dedication of our staff but also provided valuable learning opportunities that have informed improvements to our operational preparedness, command arrangements and resilience planning.

In early April, three forest and heath fires occurred within a five-day period at Moors Valley Country Park, Upton Heath and Canford Heath. At Upton Heath alone, approximately 51 hectares were affected. These incidents attracted considerable local and national media attention, including coverage from Sky News and BBC Breakfast, reflecting the scale and impact of the events.

Learning from events, such as this, has showed our approach to wildfire preparedness, including strong arrangements for resource mobilisation, interoperability with landowners and partner agencies, and enhanced understanding of how weather conditions and fuel loads influence fire behaviour - is already good. The debrief allowed the identification of parts of these areas that could be further enhanced. These incidents also highlighted the importance of public prevention messaging and community engagement in reducing wildfire risk.

999 RESPONSE Being there when you need us

On 17 April 2025, a listed First World War hangar at Old Sarum Airfield was severely damaged by fire. This was a large and complex incident involving a partially derelict structure and an adjacent café. Multiple crews from across the Service attended, supported by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service, demonstrating effective cross-border cooperation and good multi-agency working. There were no firefighter injuries or near misses at what was a challenging and dangerous incident. The incident provided valuable learning in relation to heritage building fires, risk information gathering and multi-agency coordination. It reinforced the importance of pre-planning for high-risk and historically significant sites and demonstrated the benefits of established mutual aid arrangements with neighbouring fire and rescue services.

On 09 August 2025, we declared two major incidents. The first related to the impact of concurrent heath fires on overall operational capacity, and the second specifically to a large fire at Holt Heath, near Wimborne. Approximately 100 firefighters were deployed to tackle a fire measuring around 1,000 metres by 800 metres. Resources were drawn from across the UK and we were also supported by neighbouring services from Hampshire & Isle of Wight and Devon & Somerset. Challenging weather conditions contributed to rapid fire spread, resulting in the precautionary evacuation of 20 properties near the fire front.

The Holt Heath incident occurred while crews were already committed to a separate wildfire at Newton Heath, Studland, which involved approximately 21 hectares and had been burning since 03 August 2025. In response to sustained demand, a dedicated resourcing cell was established within the Service Control Centre to monitor appliance availability, coordinate relief arrangements and maintain emergency cover.

These incidents provided significant organisational learning regarding prolonged incident management and whole-Service resilience. The early declaration of a major incident by the initial Incident Commander enabled the prompt implementation of national resilience arrangements, ensuring access to additional resources and coordinated support at an early stage. The incidents demonstrated the value of dedicated coordination structures, allowing strategic leaders to maintain oversight of resources, staff welfare, business continuity and public communications.

999 RESPONSE Being there when you need us

The deployment of national and regional resilience assets was highly effective, with support from neighbouring fire and rescue services increasing operational capacity and enabling crews to be rotated and rested during sustained operations. The welfare arrangements established both on and off the incident ground received considerable praise from supporting fire and rescue services, while the enhanced logistics teams were commended for their support throughout the incidents.

Learning from these events has strengthened future resilience planning and major incident arrangements, enhancing our ability to manage large-scale incidents whilst maintaining emergency response capability across Dorset and Wiltshire.

On 29 August 2025, a fire on the balcony of a second-floor flat at Brewery Square, Dorchester, led to the precautionary evacuation of the building. At the height of the incident, crews attended from multiple stations across the Service area, supported by an aerial ladder platform and specialist support vehicles.

The incident reinforced the importance of effective evacuation strategies within complex residential developments and highlighted the value of robust operational risk information. The initial actions taken by the Incident Commander, recognising the potential for hidden fire spread and the need to transition from a stay-put approach to a more proactive evacuation strategy, demonstrated our ability to apply lessons learned from significant incidents such as the Grenfell Tower fire. Learning from the incident has contributed to ongoing work with partners to improve understanding of modern building risks, evacuation arrangements and information sharing for high-occupancy premises.

999 RESPONSE Being there when you need us

Storm Chandra resulted in a sustained period of operational activity on 27 January 2026, with crews responding to flooding-related incidents concentrated across Dorset. Technical rescue and wading teams were deployed to assist motorists trapped in floodwater and to support the multi-agency evacuation of residents from caravan parks in Ferndown and Bournemouth.

The following day, crews from Blandford, Salisbury and Poole continued operations in response to flooding in central Blandford. Firefighters undertook systematic checks of affected properties, assisting residents to safety where required, supported by colleagues from the ambulance service's Hazardous Area Response Team.

These incidents highlighted the impact of severe weather events on local communities and reinforced the importance of strong multi-agency partnerships. Learning from the response has informed flood preparedness arrangements, strengthened links with Local Resilience Forum partners and enhanced understanding of community vulnerabilities during prolonged flooding events. The incidents also demonstrated the effectiveness of our rescue capabilities and the importance of maintaining trained personnel and equipment to respond to climate-related risks.

Collectively, these incidents have strengthened our understanding of the challenges posed with learning identified incorporated into training, operational planning, resilience arrangements and partnership working. While we already demonstrate a strong culture of preparedness and operational excellence in these areas, we remain committed to continuous improvement, ensuring lessons are captured and applied. This helps ensure we remain well prepared to respond to future incidents and continue to protect the communities we serve.

999 RESPONSE Being there when you need us

Training Exercises

During 2025–26, we completed a planned schedule of joint exercises and training events. This programme included 20 multi-agency exercises with partner organisations, 18 cross-border exercises with neighbouring fire and rescue services, two national resilience training events and several exercises involving the Service Control Centre, to test and strengthen effective incident coordination. The examples below illustrate the breadth and complexity of these activities.

On 09 May 2025, a confined space rescue exercise was hosted by Breathe Safety at Bournemouth Airport Aviation Business Park. Participants included the Technical Rescue Team from Poole, Westbourne's Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP), a crew from Salisbury, and the Hazardous Response Team from South Central Ambulance Service. The exercise tested a coordinated, multi-agency response to a confined space incident, focusing on interoperability, command arrangements and specialist rescue capability.

On 19 June 2025, we took part in a multi-agency exercise involving the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Joint Operations Centre Aldermaston, Wiltshire Police, South Western Ambulance Service (SWAST), National Highways, the Ministry of Defence Police, and defence nuclear safety and security regulators. The scenario simulated a multi-vehicle road traffic collision involving a heavy goods vehicle fuel tanker on the M4 between Junctions 17 and 16 (eastbound). Delivered as a tabletop exercise at Hangar 92, Buckley Barracks, Stanton St Quintin, the exercise tested command and control arrangements, multi-agency information sharing, security considerations and communication processes.

999 RESPONSE Being there when you need us

A large-scale multi-agency exercise was conducted at Swindon Designer Outlet Village on 06 July 2025. Fire crews from Swindon, Stratton, Westlea, Royal Wootton Bassett and Devizes, alongside multiple officers, exercised their response to a major traffic accident scenario. The exercise ensured preparedness for mass casualty triage, effective Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) working, and a National Inter-Agency Liaison Officer (NILO)-coordinated response. Partner agencies included Wiltshire Police, including Armed Response Teams, and SWAST, including their Hazardous Area Response Team (HART).

Fire survival guidance (FSG) arrangements were tested during a 'fire in a tall building' exercise held at Barclays House, Poole, on 02 October 2025. The exercise focused on the management of FSG within Service Control Centre and the effective communication of information to the incident ground, including the use of a remote Evacuation Officer. Crews attended from Poole (two), Hamworthy, Westbourne, Redhill Park, Wimborne and Portland, supported by Westbourne's ALP and Hamworthy's control unit. Dorset Police, SWAST and a Local Authority Liaison Officer from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council also took part. The British Red Cross provided volunteers to act as casualties and generated multiple emergency calls, unknowingly testing the wider Networked Fire Services Partnership response due to call volumes.

999 RESPONSE Being there when you need us

On Saturday 07 February 2026, water rescue teams participated in a large-scale flooding exercise in Bradford on Avon, utilising approximately 1.6 kilometres of the River Avon. The exercise involved teams from Dorset & Wiltshire, Devon & Somerset, and Avon Fire and Rescue Services, alongside voluntary sector swift water teams from Wiltshire Search & Rescue (WilSAR), Dorset Search & Rescue (DorSAR), Serve On and Wessex Flood Rescue. Water First Responder teams from Bridport, Sturminster Newton, Trowbridge, Bradford on Avon, Chippenham, Frome and Shepton Mallet worked alongside Technical Rescue Teams from Poole, Westlea and Bath. The exercise tested a coordinated, multi-agency response to large-scale flooding for Fire Control, Operational Crews, Water Flood Incident Managers and Police Search Advisers.

Our participation in multi-agency exercises with partner organisations and neighbouring fire and rescue services plays a vital role in maintaining and strengthening operational preparedness and resilience. These exercises provide valuable opportunities to test joint working arrangements, communication protocols, and interoperability in realistic scenarios, ensuring an effective coordinated response to complex incidents. They also support the identification of areas for improvement, the sharing of best practice, and the development of strong professional relationships across organisational boundaries. In addition, such activity enhances our ability to respond effectively to large-scale or cross-border incidents, ultimately improving safety and outcomes for the communities we serve.

999 RESPONSE Being there when you need us

Community Engagement

Firefighters in Chippenham have continued to strengthen their network of local partnerships, with a clear focus on improving fire safety and community engagement. Over the past two years, crews have established a strong and visible presence at the Chippenham Community Hub, regularly attending sessions including Seniors Support, Wiltshire Sight, Chatty Chainers and Crafty Crew. This partnership-based approach has also enabled connections with additional community support organisations, including The Shed Chippenham and Right at Home, a local care provider.

During the summer of 2025, we attended large community events, ran fundraisers and opened our doors. We took part in: 'To The Sea' challenge supporting Pewsey Vale FC (29 June), Sherborne Pride (06 July), Wilton's fundraiser for local Stars Appeal that supports Salisbury District Hospital (06 July), Bourne Free (12 July) and Swindon Pride (09 August), Salisbury Fire Station open day (23 August), and Bridport Fire Station open day (06 September). At each event, personnel engaged directly with members of the public, provided information on home fire safety, responded to enquiries about the Service, and promoted recruitment opportunities for both on-call and corporate roles.

999 RESPONSE Being there when you need us

In response to rising knife crime across Wiltshire, a firefighter from Swindon led a proactive community safety initiative. Working in partnership with Wiltshire Police, he supported the installation of a knife amnesty bin outside Swindon Fire Station, providing a safe and anonymous means for weapons to be surrendered. The bin was subsequently relocated to Stratton Fire Station to increase accessibility for the wider community. Since its introduction, the initiative has received strong local support, with dozens of knives removed from circulation.

In October 2025, the DocBike charity hosted an awards ceremony in Poundbury to recognise individuals and organisations contributing to motorcycle safety in Dorset. Established locally to reduce motorcycle-related collisions and injuries, we were delighted to receive an award from the charity for exceptional service to motorcycle injury prevention. This recognised our ongoing support, including the provision of facilities for DocBike operations and the delivery of BikerDown motorcycle safety sessions.

999 RESPONSE Being there when you need us

A public CPR and defibrillator training session was held on Sunday 22 February 2026 at Maiden Newton Fire Station. The session, which was free to attend, ran throughout the afternoon and was delivered by a Service Casualty Care Trainer, supported by firefighters from Maiden Newton Fire Station and local community first responders. The event helped to equip members of the public with essential lifesaving skills and strengthened local resilience.

Summary

This work has led to:

- Continuing to provide leadership of the NFCC On Call Working Group, driving national initiatives to enhance the attraction, recruitment and retention of on call firefighters through evidence based approaches and collaborative best practice.
- Strengthening operational capability through targeted investment.
- Continuing to invest in fire engines, specialist appliances, advanced equipment and high quality personal protective equipment to meet the needs of the modern fire and rescue service, to ensure a safe, effective and resilient emergency response.
- Ensuring optimal alignment of resources to risk and demand.
- Undertaking a comprehensive review of fire station operations, assessing appliance provision, response capability and asset deployment against community risk, Service demand and long term financial sustainability.

Looking ahead, we aim to:

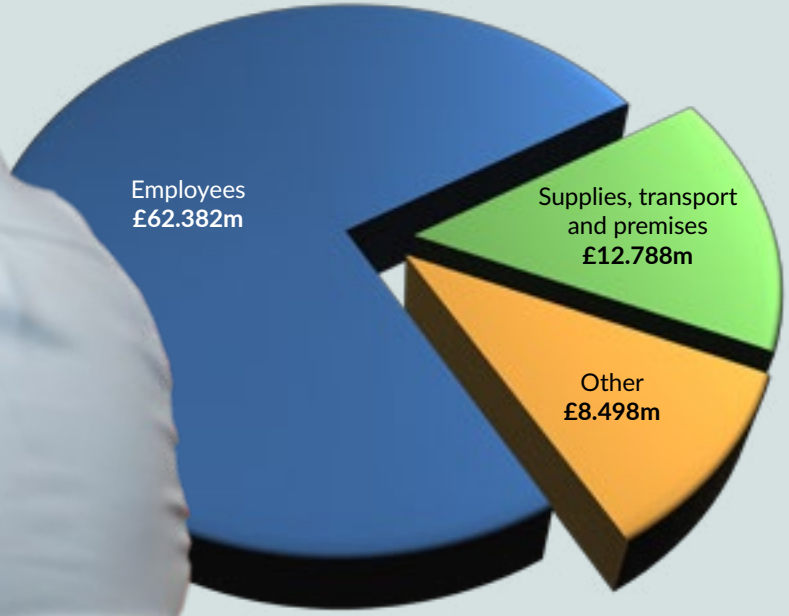
- Continue to strengthen our approach to the recruitment and retention of on call firefighters, ensuring a resilient, sustainable workforce that reflects the needs of our communities.
- Continue to enhance our operational focus and capability, ensuring our people, equipment and systems are aligned to deliver a safe, effective and responsive emergency service.
- Continue to ensure the efficiency and productivity of fire stations and staff, maximising value for money through effective resource management, workforce planning and performance oversight.

£ GOVERNANCE Making every penny count

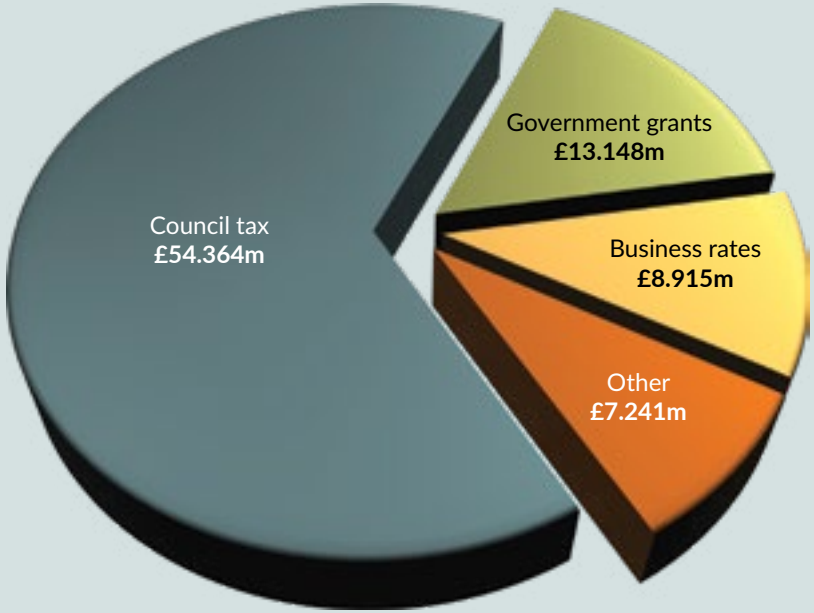
Ensuring value for money, along with good governance and financial management, is at the heart of everything we do. This is supported by the continued positive assurance from both our internal and external auditors. Our budget is funded by a combination of council tax and government grants along with a one percent share of local business rates. Our net revenue budget for 2025-26 was £76.4m.

Our Band D council tax precept for 2025-26 was £91.95. The national average was £95.56. Whilst enhanced council tax precept flexibility of £5 for the Authority was granted by central government for 2025-26, this income boost was completely offset by the full removal of three grant income funding allocations totalling £1.8m.

The key areas of budgeted expenditure were:



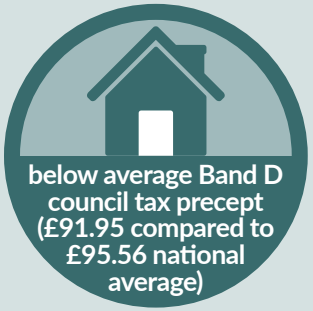
This was funded by:



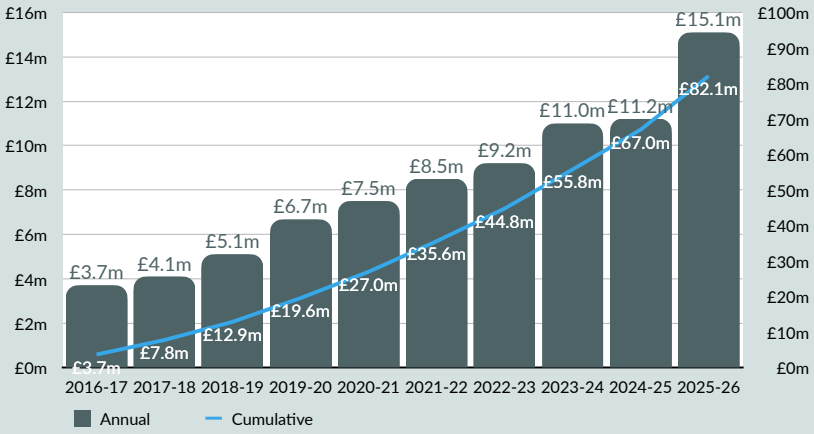
£ GOVERNANCE Making every penny count

The Fire Authority is required to approve a balanced revenue budget position for each respective financial year. To achieve this the Authority has had to develop significant levels of savings in the ten-year period since combination. The cumulative effect is saving over £15.1m each year.

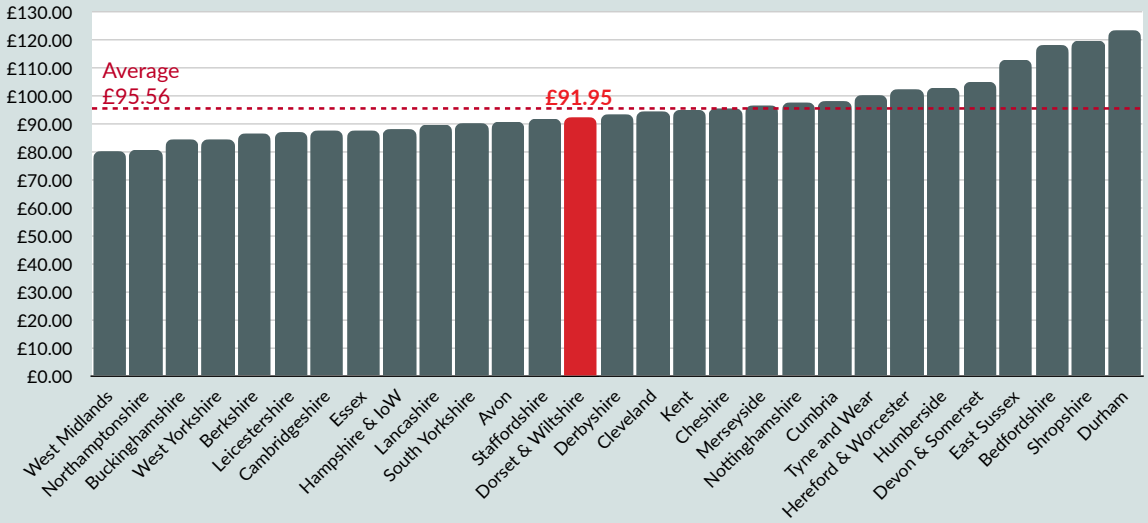
Costs to the Service have increased significantly in that same period and continue to do so. Following the multi-year Local Government Finance Settlement, confirmed in February 2026, the Fire Authority continues to face difficult decisions to deliver ongoing financial sustainability over the medium-term. We are committed to delivering further savings and efficiencies in alignment to our strategic objectives within the Community Safety Plan (CSP) and the next phase of our modernisation programme.



Service savings and efficiencies



Band D council tax fire precept for 2025-26



The approved capital programme for 2025-26 totalled £10.7m, and was used to:

- Invest in our training facilities.
- Maintain our fire stations and other buildings.
- Replace older vehicles and associated equipment.
- Ensure our ICT equipment and information systems remain appropriate and secure.

The 'What we spend' (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.

During the reporting year, a total of 40 complaints and 127 compliments were received. Overall, we maintained a strong level of performance in responding to complaints within the required timescales. Across the year, 96.7% of complaints were resolved within 20 working days, or within an alternative timescale agreed with the complainant. In total, 72.5% of complaints were not upheld following investigation.

The complaints process is used as an opportunity to learn and improve upon the way in which services are delivered to communities. In the last year this has included improvements to individual cases related to driving on blue lights; how our data is managed through new technology such as body worn cameras; and how we manage complaints relating to our statutory functions.

Key points:

We received a clean bill of health from external auditors, for financial management and value for money.

We had external verification of the Authority's financial efficiency and effectiveness demonstrated via HMICFRS published data:

- Firefighter cost per person per year: Our Service = £25.03, England average = £30.80.
- Expenditure per head of the population: Our Service = £42.33, England average = £46.66.

Council tax remains our main source of income to the Authority and the current precept level is significantly below the national average.

FIRE & RESCUE

Data, Digital and Technology

Our Data, Digital and Technology (DDaT) Strategy continued to progress during the year, supporting us to work more effectively, providing an ICT infrastructure that is fit for purpose, strengthen security and resilience and make better use of technology and data for improved decision making. Key areas of progress include:

- Cyber security remains a strategic risk as international threat levels continue to evolve.
- We have maintained our focus on protecting ourselves from vulnerabilities through a combination of technical safeguards, procedural controls and ongoing awareness.
- We also continue to work with national and regional partners to learn from security incidents, understand emerging risks from new technologies and adapt our plans accordingly.

Artificial intelligence (AI) presents both opportunities and risks. During the year, work began to ensure the Service can make responsible use of AI while protecting the organisation, its people and the communities it serves. Used appropriately, AI has the potential to support our efficiency programme by improving productivity and helping us maximise the value of our technology and data.

Freedom of Information (FOI) requests increased during the year by, 64.7% with 219 requests received in total compared with 133 in the previous year. Despite this increase, 90% of requests were responded to within the statutory timescales.

In addition, 25 subject access requests were received, with 96% responded to within the statutory timeframe.

Data protection and security considerations continue to be considered at the start of any new process; system change or procurement activity. This includes due diligence on data sharing agreements and at the procurement stage to ensure that data is managed compliantly, shared responsibly and that data processors are appointed appropriately.

£ GOVERNANCE Making every penny count

Summary

This work has led to:

- A continued strong focus across the Service on the need to identify efficiencies and deliver value-for-money, good governance and financial management.
- The delivery of year-on-year savings to help set a balanced budget.
- 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.
- Being rated as 'Good' by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, for making best use of resources and making the fire and rescue services affordable now and in the future.
- Better alignment of our response services to changing risks and demands whilst maintaining financial stability.
- Improved governance for DDaT projects delivering improved data, digital tools and technology to better support service delivery.
- Enhanced information governance and cyber security maturity through strengthened controls, improved compliance with data protection requirements, increased organisational awareness, and closer collaboration with partners to respond to emerging threats and risks.

Summary

Looking ahead, we aim to:

- Ensure our financial sustainability.
- Continue scrutiny on all elements of planned and recurring spend to identify further opportunities for efficiencies.
- Review all elements of the capital programme, particularly funding streams to ensure ongoing viability and affordability.
- Begin to deliver our next phase of modernisation utilising our data to improve the alignment of our response to changing risks and demands, with a focus on re-designing our operational response to maximise the efficiency of our stations.
- Maximise the use of data, digital tools and technology to realise efficiencies across the organisation, through joined up data, and streamlined and automated processes that are secure and compliant.
- Further strengthen our cyber security arrangements by alignment to national standards.
- Enhance the Service to deliver better outcomes for our communities via improved financial sustainability, efficiency of our time and money and increased effectiveness of matching resources to risk.

3

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 occur.

Workforce and succession planning

We have strong workforce and succession planning processes to support every stage of employment. Each year, Heads of Department complete succession plans, where we monitor retirement profiles, promotions and transfers. This helps us to make good and timely decisions about workforce planning matters, ensuring we attract, recruit, train, develop, and keep talented staff.

Staff safety and competence

The safety and competence of our workforce is 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.

This approach utilises technology to save time and money, ensuring our staff can focus on developing and learning while still undertaking their role.

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

As part of our commitment to continued cultural development and national expectations around professional standards, we have embedded the Code of Ethics and The Incident Command Skills (THINCS) non-technical skills framework across all command tiers. This ensures that ethical standards, non-technical behaviours, and professional conduct are integrated within command refresher days and operational training, not treated as separate activities.

We continue to maintain certification to the internationally recognised ISO 45001 Occupational Health and Safety Management Standard. This provides independent assurance that our health and safety management system remains effective, supports continual improvement, and aligns with our commitment to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of our workforce and communities.

Digital

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. Work is underway to introduce a new, modernised Learning Management System, replacing static eLearning modules with interactive digital content that is trackable, accessible on and off station, and aligned to our three-year training plan. This will reduce reliance on non-contracted hours and deliver measurable cost savings to us.

Leadership and Management Training

We provide extensive leadership and management training focused on the Code of Ethics and National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Leadership Framework.

Developing an internal coaching cadre

This year, we took a significant step in professionalising our leadership development offer through the establishment of an internal coaching cadre. This comprises of coaches qualified at Incident Command Firefighter (ICF) level five and level three. This strategic leadership strategy is designed to sit at the centre of how we develop our people, sustain its leadership culture, and translates leadership training into embedded behaviour.

Coaching is already recognised as a national priority by the NFCC Coaching Network, and numerous cultural reviews into the sector sets out a clear expectation that services invest in ethical, capable leadership at every level. The development of an internal team positions us to meet those expectations with sustained capacity.

Another significant development this year has been the creation of a Service-wide leadership framework built on the principles of High Challenge, High Support (HCHS). Built on two principles, challenge directly and care personally, this framework provides managers at every level with a shared leadership language and a practical, repeatable structure for day-to-day conversations. It is intended to become the consistent standard for how we lead in the Service. The approach provides a clear and agreed standard for how leadership plays out in practice. The framework is being embedded progressively across training delivery strands. HCHS, a coaching mindset, and professional coaching are three distinct but deeply complementary elements of our leadership approach. Each one reinforces the others, and together they form a coherent and self-sustaining model for developing people.

This approach builds on the various courses offered as part of our development pathway. These include:

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

Our Leadership in Lifesaving and Trainer Assessor courses are co-designed with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) to support a working partnership across lifesaving organisations. Our Trainer Assessor course is accredited by Skills for Justice providing staff with a formal qualification in training and assessing, to maintain competence in their roles.

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, ensuring our staff continue to work in alignment with our Code of Ethics.

Code of Ethics

Our new starters are invited to attend a code of ethics workshop facilitated by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Learning & Organisational Development (L&OD) Team to ensure that all staff are aware and fully understand their role in applying the code of ethics. This workshop is also available as a facilitated discussion for all teams to use as part of their team development and to ensure that staff are aware of expectations around our values and behaviours. Our corporate induction day has been redesigned to further strengthen EDI training for all new starters.

We also offer:

- Executive Leadership Programme for strategic leaders.
- Colourworks personality profiles and team development workshops to support self-development and team effectiveness.
- Bitesize Leaders Forum and annual Managers' Briefing Days enabling managers to meet, share ideas and learn about important topics.
- Positive action campaigns and initiatives to further support underrepresented groups.

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. We have apprentices undertaking qualifications including Autocare Technician, Fire Safety Advisor, Associate Project Manager, Data Analyst, Coaching, Leadership and Management and Chartered Manager Degree. These programmes develop skills, support career growth, and help us retain talented people.

Our Train the Trainer Programme ensures station-based instructors are skilled, consistent, and assessed against clear standards, with delivery quality assured through our broader quality assurance framework. This supports our commitment to high-quality, standardised training at every level.

In addition, staff can also attend external training, conferences and seminars, relevant to their role, to ensure continued professional development and to further enhance their skills.

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Operational training

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 continue to evolve in areas such as firefighting techniques and tactical ventilation; this includes external firefighting tactics and the use of fans to control smoke and fires within buildings. More recently our instructors have trained operational staff on the use of smoke curtains, which provides additional tools for dealing with fires in high-rise buildings. New approaches such as these are aimed at reducing fire damage and ensuring members of the public are safely evacuated should they have a fire in their home.

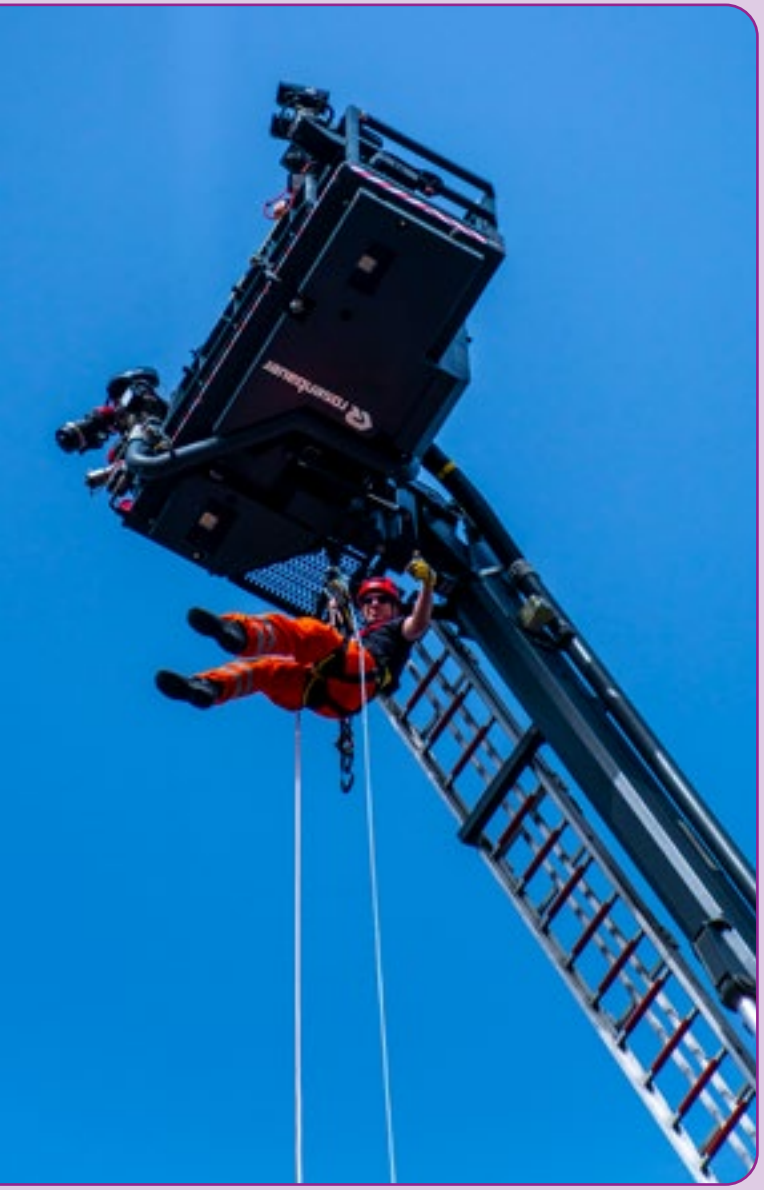
Our Breathing Apparatus (BA) Instructors have designed, developed and published a new BA manual to help standardise procedures across the Service. This provides a comprehensive reference document to ensure our firefighters maintain high standards of competence and safety. Our RTC Instructors Course was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

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.

After reviewing the 2024 modern firefighting doctrine and in recognition that our current training sites don't always replicate the kinds of fire conditions seen in modern buildings, we've created and put in place a plan to use demolition sites and derelict buildings as more realistic training environments.

These venues provide authentic building layouts and conditions at low cost, complementing our existing training centre provision. This initiative also supports compliance with our Service Exercises Procedure and addresses HMICFRS findings on the need for structured cross-border exercising

PEOPLE Supporting and developing our people



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.
- Continued to use a mix of learning methods to make training flexible and effective.
- Coordinated 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 South West for the implementation of new National Operational Guidance and represented the region nationally on this subject.
- Shared our innovative approach to the implementation of NOG, which has quickly gained recognition within the fire and rescue sector.

We have been formally recognised by the NFCC as a forerunner in the development of NOG. This positions us as an active contributor to national best practice, not merely a recipient of it, and is a status we are committed to sustaining and building upon.

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 consolidating our procedures and approach to this type of fire incident.

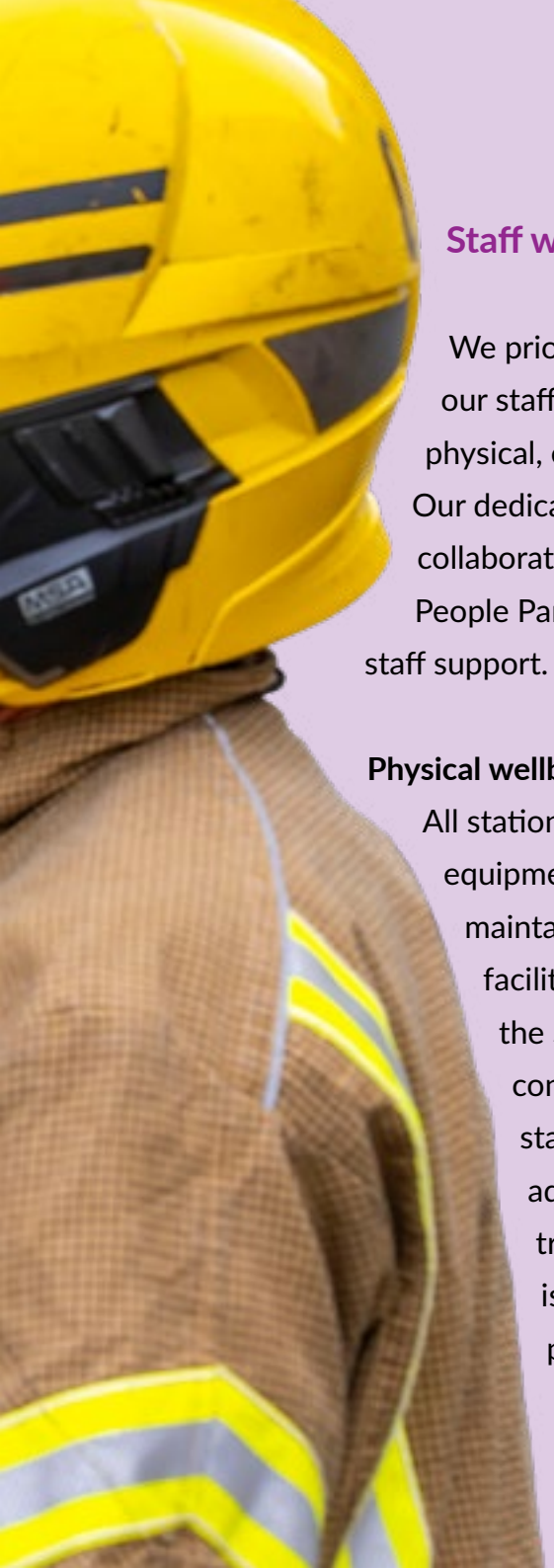
Through structured coordination of exercises at station, group, and Service level, activity is aligned and delivered consistently across the organisation. Regional collaboration through the South West Cross-Border Group further strengthens preparedness to respond beyond Service boundaries and supports national expectations for joint training and multi-agency working.

Recognising achievements

We host an annual Passing Out Parade at Salisbury Fire Station to celebrate the successful completion of our wholetime, on-call and control firefighters development courses. 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.

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

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 People Partners to ensure a holistic approach to staff support.

Physical wellbeing

All stations are equipped with appropriate fitness equipment to support staff in achieving and maintaining operational fitness. This is also a facility which can be used by all staff within the Service to support overall fitness and contributes to positive mental wellbeing. All staff are supported by health and fitness advisers, as well as a network of physical training instructors. A Physiotherapist is also available supporting both preventative and rehabilitative care.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing

We continue to provide a robust talking therapy package through a procured provision as part of our wider occupational health arrangements. This is available to all staff and family members, reducing the current wait time that would be expected via the NHS. Additional mental health support can also be provided via our Occupational Health provider. We use this as part of our overall case management where a clinical recommendation has been provided, particularly in complex cases such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

A review of our current post incident welfare arrangements has been undertaken with recommendations being considered for how we can further strengthen these through further embedding by training, education and management reinforcement.

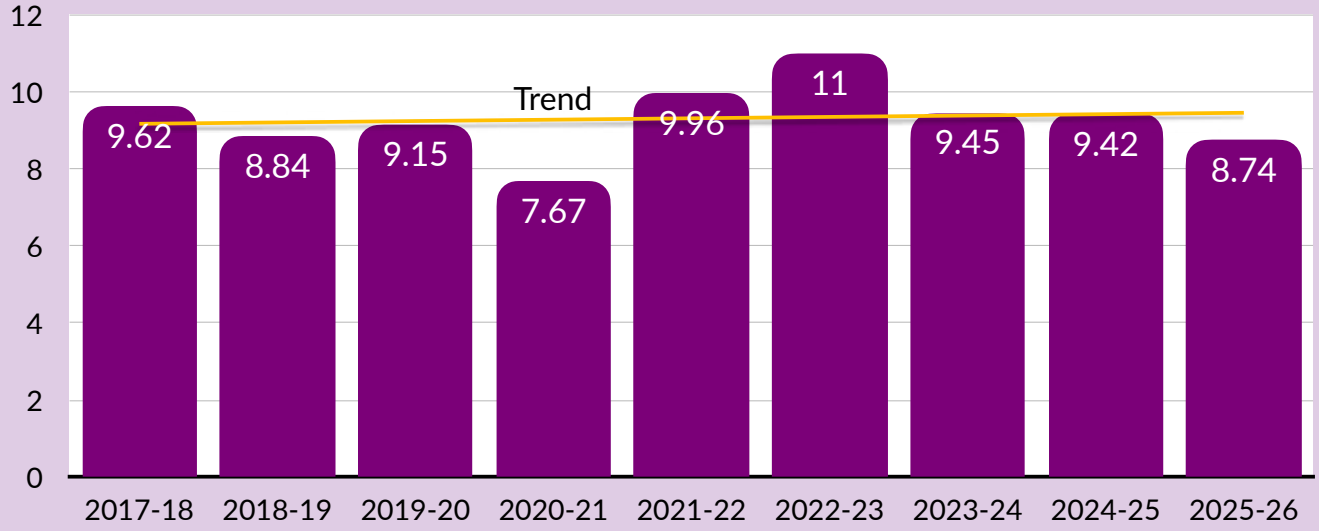
PEOPLE Supporting and developing our people

Managing sickness absence

Sickness absence remains a key focus for us, and we continually strive to improve average sickness levels. The target of under 9.50 shifts lost per person for 2025-26 was achieved, with an actual figure of 8.74. This represents continued improvement from to 2023-24 with our long term trend slightly decreasing. Demonstrating the significance of our commitment to appropriate absence management and staff support.

Mindful of the need to adapt to the current environment, with the pressures on the NHS and timescales our staff are faced with we have recently changed our approach to how we manage limited duties, ensuring we get the right balance between supporting our staff, achieving value for money, and meeting our business needs. Our approach takes into account staff skills and knowledge and match them to priority work areas that must be completed, especially where required for legal or health and safety reasons.

Average number of shifts lost to sickness



Resources and signposting

Safe2Be remains the focus area for all health and wellbeing signposting and is supported by our dedicated procedures regarding Health & Wellbeing, Occupational Health and Health and Fitness. It is regularly updated to ensure it remains valid and fit for purpose.

The medical insurance provider which we have engaged with since 2024, remains popular with membership increasing month on month. This is not funded for by the Service, but is paid for by the staff member, providing day one access to diagnostics and a number of treatment options.

Managing performance

We have strengthened our approach to professional standards, leading to more consistent and high-quality case management, and reinforcing its commitment to maintaining high standards of conduct and behaviour. In addition, a Strategic Case Board has been established to provide enhanced oversight, governance, and accountability across this area of work. This year also saw the introduction of the Compliance and Investigation Team, established to provide dedicated support for formal investigations. This has enhanced the consistency, quality, and timeliness of case handling, and contributed to a reduction in case resolution times, supporting the improvement objectives identified in the previous year.

PEOPLE Supporting and developing our people

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality, diversity, and inclusion is 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.

Progress of our Culture Action Delivery Plan

Our Culture Action Plan included actions designed to enhance arrangements for colleagues across a range of areas. Progress during the year has included work to review women's facilities on stations, strengthen welfare provision on the fireground, improve psychological and physical safety at work, and further develop leadership training. Alongside delivery of this plan, we have continued to listen to colleagues through a range of feedback channels, including new starter surveys, all-staff surveys, and staff networks, ensuring that insight from across the organisation informs ongoing improvements. Additional progress has also included a review and pilot of refreshed EDI training, enhancements to our independent reporting line and the introduction of 'This is Me', a tool designed to support colleagues in communicating their diverse and evolving needs in the workplace.

We are grateful to our independent critical friend and Co-Chair of the Culture Development Committee, Sunita Gamblin QPM, for her continued guidance, insight, and oversight in supporting our cultural improvements. This year we also welcomed Nazir Afzal OBE, who generously gave his time to share his lived experiences and his perspectives to help further strengthen our organisational culture and approach.

Together, this external challenge and support has played an important role in helping us to reflect, improve, and develop.

Positive action

Representing our community remains a priority for us, because we know that the more reflective we are of the people we serve, the better their needs will be met. Whilst we continue to innovate and deliver

new ways to attract, recruit, retain and progress groups of people currently underrepresented, we know much remains to be done, however we can share a few achievements.

- Following our Buddy Scheme and Buddy Me Days in 2024 three women successfully passed the process to become wholetime firefighters.
- Another participant went on to be appointed as a Fire Safety Advisor in our Protection department.
- We introduced the Developing Diverse Leaders Programme, supported by external coaches with a range of lived experiences. The programme helped six colleagues from underrepresented groups to recognise and develop their leadership potential, with five participants subsequently progressing either within their teams or elsewhere in the Service.

We have six staff networks that provide peer support and play an important role in informing Service direction. We continue to work with partners such as Women in the Fire Service, the Asian Fire Service Association, and Race Equality Matters to support and develop opportunities for underrepresented colleagues. During the year, we delivered events including International Men's Day, International Women's Day, and a Women's Hormones event, alongside a focus on strengthening allyship and encouraging engagement from across the workforce. To support this further, we hosted "The Power of Inclusion", bringing together staff panels to explore a range of diversity and inclusion themes, aligned to our values-led approach.

Psychological safety, ethical practice and more

Our 'Safe To' portal continues to be a valuable resource for promoting belonging, wellbeing, and leadership across the Service. This year, we have enhanced its content to include information on our positive action approach and allyship resources developed with Race Equality Matters. The introduction of a digital 'Human Library' also provides access to short films sharing lived experiences from colleagues, partners, and others, covering a range of topics including disability, sexism, and the impact of hormones. This helps create a safe and accessible space for learning and greater understanding of the people we work with and serve.

Summary

This work has led to:

- Stronger governance has improved the quality and consistency of case management and investigations, reduced resolution times, clarified capability and conduct processes, and strengthened organisational learning and accountability.
- Aligning training, more closely, with the Code of Ethics and National Operational Guidance.
- Our collaborative approach, with regional and national partners, being recognised as contributing to sector as learning and best practice.
- A greater culture of peer support and confidence in being your professional self within the workplace.

Looking ahead, we aim to:

- Continue to strengthen accountability, early intervention, and continuous improvement.
- Continue embedding leadership and coaching, modernising learning, improving career pathways, and strengthening workforce capability and resilience.
- Expand peer support resources in line with staff needs.
- Deliver “Our Plan – Working Better Together” to improve wellbeing, refresh induction and EDI training, and strengthen positive action for attraction, retention, and progression.

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 they serve. The vast majority of our 50 stations are crewed only by on-call firefighters who work alongside their wholetime colleagues.

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**.

Performance against corporate targets

	2025/26	Target	Performance
We will reduce the number of accidental dwelling fires, compared to the average attended during the last five years.	746	622	19.7% increase against 5-year average
We will achieve a 15-minute response time on average, for the first appliance in attendance at confirmed road traffic collisions (this includes call handling, turnout and travel time).	12:32	15:00	Achieved
We will reduce the number of deliberate fires, compared to the average attended during the last five years.	872	835	4.4% increase against 5-year average
We will provide intervention activities for 100% of all identified buildings that fall within our Risk-Based Intervention Programme.	100%	100%	Achieved
We will achieve a reduction in our attendance at automatic fire alarms which result in a false alarm, compared to the average attended during the last five years.	4896	4933	0.8% reduction against 5-year average
We will achieve a 10-minute response time on average, for the first appliance in attendance at confirmed fires in sleeping risk premises (this includes call handling, turnout and travel time).	10:10	10:00	Almost achieved (10 seconds over)
We will achieve a reduction in the average sickness levels, compared to the average during the last five years.	8.74 shifts	9.50 shifts	Achieved
We will improve the diversity of our workforce as a whole, compared to the average over the last five years.	24.8%	22.9%	8.3% above target
We will reduce the number of working days lost to work related injuries and ill health, compared to the average over the last five years.	1,215	1,024	191 day increase against annual target (13 people make up 81% of this figure)
We will reduce our CO2 emissions across our electricity and gas consumption, compared to the average over the last five years.	1,079	1,183	8.8% under target

Key Target achieved Working towards target Target not achieved

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