

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Public Performance Meeting

May 2023

Protective Marking: **Official**



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Staffordshire
Fire and Rescue Service
preventing • protecting • responding

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1.0 Current Areas of Priority

1.1 Values and Culture

Over the past six months, a series of communications have gone out to staff highlighting the importance of our values and culture and encouraging open discussions.

This follows an initial internal culture review culminating in the production of Our Culture Report.

The final report was published for all staff to read and discuss. The report does not present solutions, but gives an impartial account of our staff's experiences and provided an opportunity for us to start a Service-wide conversation about what we can do to improve the culture where it may fall short of expectations.

The publication of the London Fire Brigade report in November 2022 prompted an email to all staff encouraging them to familiarise themselves with the report and serves to highlight the reporting and support channels available to them should they have any concerns. This support includes an independent external reporting tool that is available for the support of all staff, the support of union bodies, and the whistle blowing policy within the Service.

In doing so we have aimed to honestly embrace and reflect on what we are being told by our own staff, at the same time acknowledging the current national context.

In December, the decision was taken to move from our existing Cultural Framework to the Core Code of Ethics. The Core Code sets out five ethical principles:

❖ Integrity ❖ Dignity and Respect ❖ Putting our Communities First ❖ Leadership ❖ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

These provide a basis for promoting good behaviour and challenging inappropriate behaviour, as seen in our framework. The ethical principles have been produced specifically for Fire and Rescue Services by the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Local Government Association and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners.

The refreshed embedding of the Code of Ethics commenced in the New Year starting with a weekly focus on each of the values in our internal newsletter; iNews. For each of the values we have a Principal Officer Champion. Each Champion wrote a personal statement about what that value means to them and their commitment to it. We are continuing to include the Core Code of Ethics into all of our policies as they are updated including our new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

Late January saw the news of investigations into staff at Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service, again prompting internal communications to all our staff. This was further developed with a section on February's face-to-face briefing encouraging our workforce to discuss how they can influence culture positively on a day-to-day basis.

A broadcast of a Radio 4 programme highlighting misogyny in the fire and rescue service resulted in a request to all staff to listen to the recording and reflect on it as a team. Teams were expected to provide a summary of the discussions to the Assistant Chief Fire Officer with an offer for people to also share their personal



experiences if they so wished. The aim of this was to encourage discussion around difficult issues in a direct and honest way and to be as transparent as possible whilst respecting individual confidentiality.

Nearly all teams gave us feedback, and summaries of these discussions have been shared with all of the Principal Officers.

The end of March saw the publication of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services' spotlight report on ***Values and Culture in fire and rescue services***. This report was issued with a series of recommendations for the sector, government and services.

The report was again brought to the attention of staff with a face-to-face briefing request to discuss what we do individually, and as a Service, to foster a healthy and supportive culture in line with the Core Code of Ethics.



2.0 Providing a Flexible & Responsive Service

2.1 Incidents Attended & Road Traffic Collisions

- The Service attended a total of **4150** incidents between October 2022 and March 2023.
- In the same 6-month period Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service attended **3812** incidents in 2021 and **3891** incidents in 2019.
- There is an increase in the total number of attended incidents from the same period in both 2019 (Pre Covid-19) and in 2021/22.

Figure 1: Yearly Comparison of Total Incidents Attended between October and March with breakdown of incident type

19/20-22/23 Comparison Oct-Mar				21/22-22/23 Comparison Oct-Mar			
Attendance Type	Total Number of Incidents OCT19-MAR20	Total Number of Incidents OCT22-MAR23	% Change	Attendance Type	Total Number of Incidents OCT21-MAR22	Total Number of Incidents OCT22-MAR23	% Change
01. Primary Fire	691	639	↓ -7.53%	01. Primary Fire	607	639	↑ 5.27%
02. Secondary Fire	493	555	↑ 12.58%	02. Secondary Fire	533	555	↑ 4.13%
03. Special Service Call	750	837	↑ 11.60%	03. Special Service Call	731	837	↑ 14.50%
04. Road Traffic Collision	330	386	↑ 16.97%	04. Road Traffic Collision	366	386	↑ 5.46%
05. Chimney Dwelling	54	41	↓ -24.07%	05. Chimney Dwelling	45	41	↓ -8.89%
06. Chimney Other	1	0	↓ -100.00%	06. Chimney Other	1	0	↓ -100.00%
07. False Alarm: Equipment	745	881	↑ 18.26%	07. False Alarm: Equipment	798	881	↑ 10.40%
08. False Alarm: Good Intent	767	706	↓ -7.95%	08. False Alarm: Good Intent	677	706	↑ 4.28%
09. False Alarm Malicious	60	105	↑ 75.00%	09. False Alarm Malicious	54	105	↑ 94.44%
Total	3891	4150	↑ 6.66%	Total	3812	4150	↑ 8.87%

Primary fires are potentially more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property and meet at least one of the following conditions:

- Any fire that occurred in a (non-derelict) building, vehicle or (some) outdoor structures
- Any fire involving fatalities, casualties or rescues
- Any fire attended by five or more pumping appliances.

Secondary fires are generally small outdoor fires, not involving people or property. These include refuse fires, grassland fires and fires in derelict buildings or vehicles, unless these fires involved casualties or rescues, or five or more pumping appliances attended, in which case they become primary fires.

Special Service Calls are defined as any incident which falls outside the scope of the function of fire attendance. These incidents include both emergency and non-emergency response.



Examples of Special Service Calls can be animal rescue, hazardous materials attendance, road spillages, gaining entry and exit in emergency situations and assisting other emergency services and the military with environmental catastrophe such as flooding.

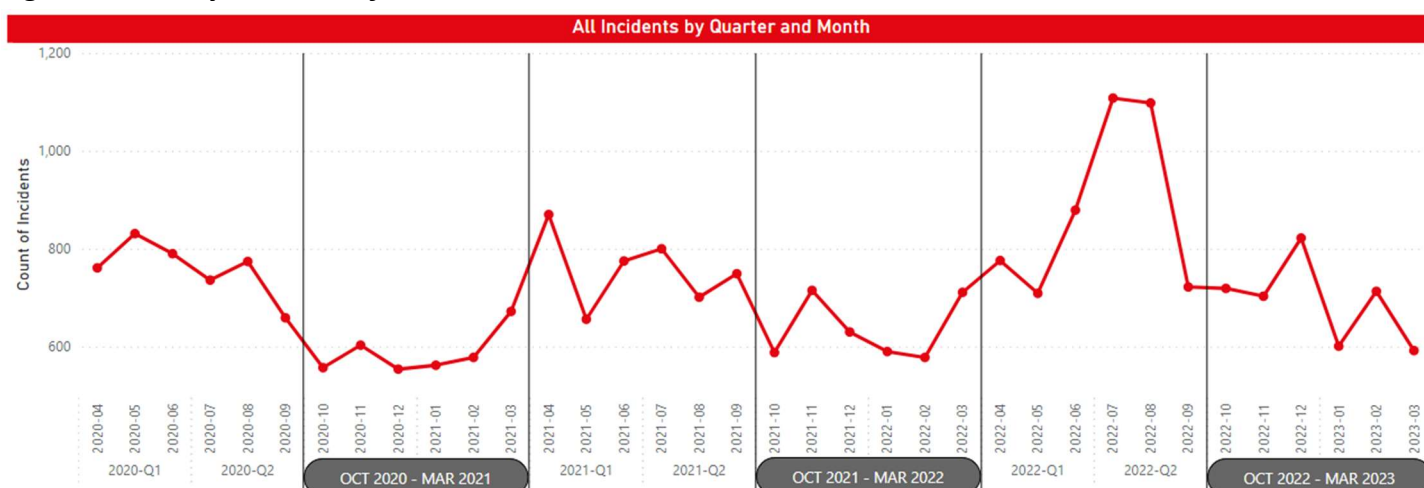
Emerging Demand

The most notable area of increased demand change for the Service over the period of October 2022 to March 2023 has been concerned with attendance at Special Service Call incidents.

A **14.50%** increase is noted from the number of Special Service Calls attended between October to March 2022, and a **11.60%** increase is noted from the number of incidents attended in the same period from 2019.

A large proportion of these Special Service calls were noted in December 2022, in response to ‘flooding effecting electrics’ as a result of very cold weather and a short thawing period causing pipes within residential premises and also mains water supplies to freeze and to break. Many of these incidents were concerned with assisting vulnerable or elderly residents directly, or by supporting other agencies to affect entry to flooded unoccupied premises in order to isolate mains electricity and water.

Figure 2: Three-year trend of Total Incidents Attended



The period of June to August 2022 was noted as a time of SPATE conditions nationally, with fire services receiving high levels of demand for attendance at secondary outdoor fires in particular during the period.

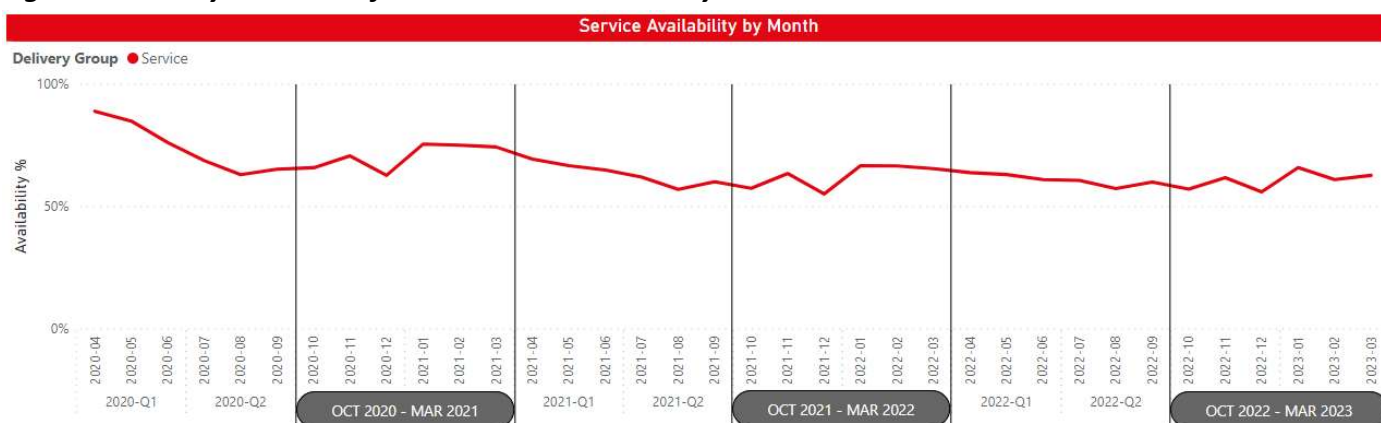


2.2 Service Availability

Service Availability is based on the percentage of time that an appliance is available to attend an incident. The Total Service Availability is calculated from all fire appliances at Whole Time, Retained, and Day Duty Fire stations. 'Unavailability' factors such as insufficient numbers of qualified crew, equipment defects, or training events can contribute to the percentage of time that the Service appliance is unavailable to respond to incidents.

- Whole-Time Fire Stations means firefighters are based at the station 24/7.
- Retained Fire Stations are covered by 'On-Call' Firefighters and are not staffed 24/7.
- Day Duty Fire Stations are a combination of the two models above with Whole-Time crewing during day shift periods.

Figure 3: Three-year trend of Total Service Availability



Between October 2022 and March 2023, the total average Service availability is recorded as **60.63%**. In the same period in the previous year this was recorded as **62.34%** and between October 2020 – March 2021 this was recorded as **70.58%**.

There are many factors that can affect the ability for a Fire Service to respond to incidents. A breakdown of appliances at Whole Time, Retained, and Day Duty stations is provided below; which displays the reasons for unavailability in further detail.

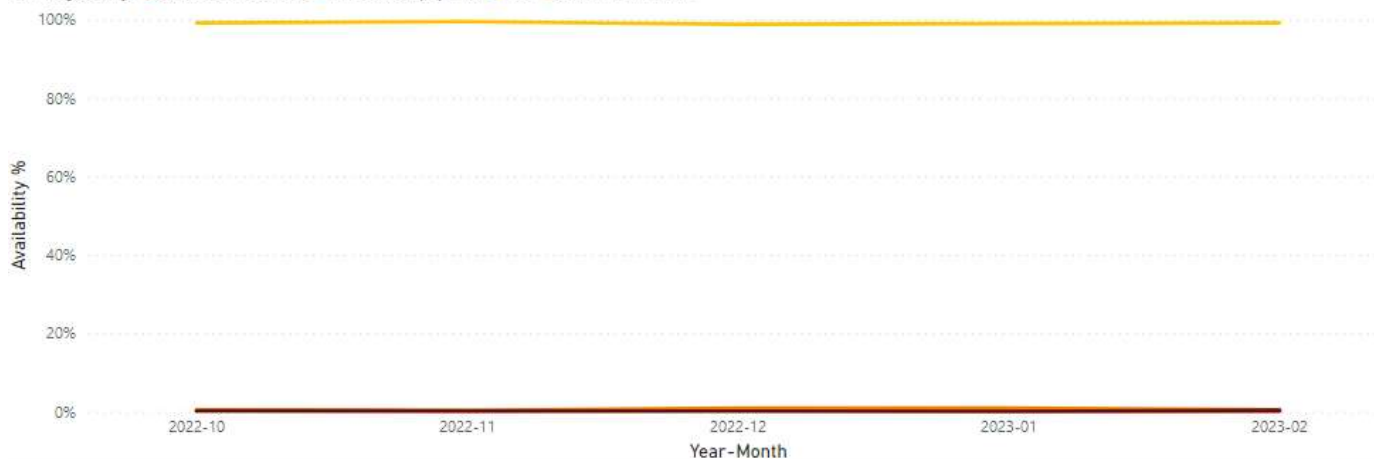


Figure 4: Whole Time Service Availability October 2022 – March 2023

Availability			Reasons for Unavailability		
Available	Unavailable	Alternative Vehicle Use	Crew/Qualifications	Defective Equipment	Other
99.09%	0.91%	0.00%	0.12%	0.61%	0.18%

Availability Breakdown

Delivery Group ● Crew/Qualifications ● Defective Equipment ● On ● Other Unavailable



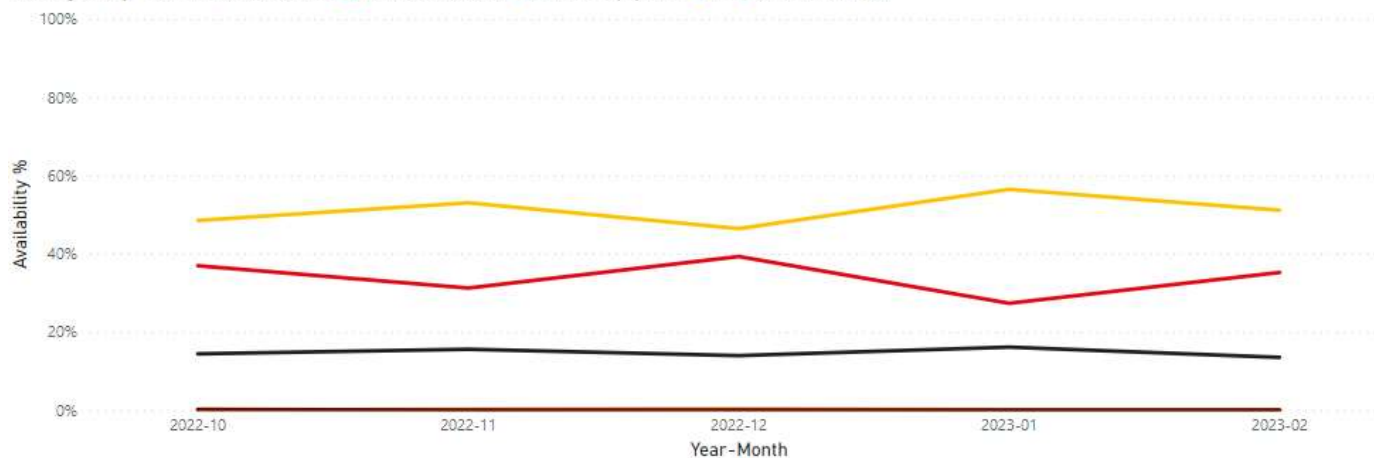
Between October 2022 and March 2023, the total Whole Time Service availability is recorded as **99.09%**. In the same period in the previous year this was recorded as **99.04%** and between October 2020 – March 2021 this was recorded as **99.24%**.

Figure 5: Retained Service Availability October 2022 – March 2023

Availability			Reasons for Unavailability		
Available	Unavailable	Alternative Vehicle Use	Crew/Qualifications	Defective Equipment	Other
51.09%	34.20%	14.71%	33.99%	0.15%	0.06%

Availability Breakdown

Delivery Group ● Alternative Vehicle Use ● Crew/Qualifications ● Defective Equipment ● On ● Other Unavailable



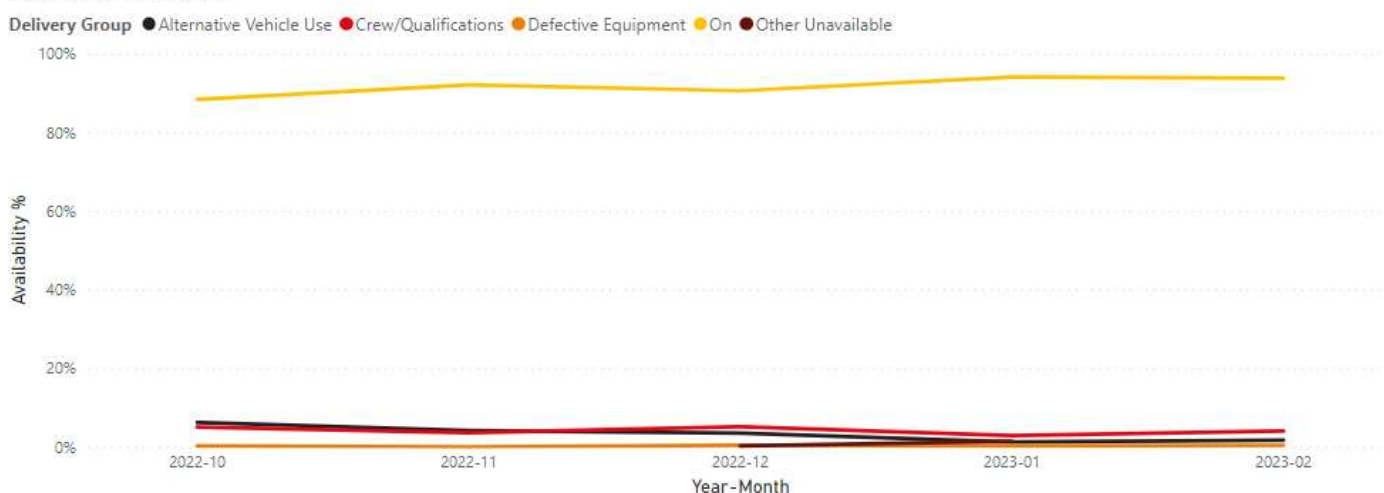
Between October 2022 and March 2023, the total Retained Service availability is recorded as **51.09%**, with alternative vehicle use (not being used as a pump) contributing an additional **14.71%**. In the same period in the previous year this was recorded as **51.51%** with alternative vehicle use contributing an additional **11.88%** and between October 2020 – March 2021 this was recorded as **62.62%** with alternative vehicle use contributing an additional **10.14%**.

The main contributory factor for appliance unavailability at retained stations is the number of retained crew available, and the number of those retained crew that have the necessary operational training and qualifications to allow a deployment to an incident. This is the largest factor affecting Total Service Availability.

Figure 6: Day Duty Service Availability October 2022 – March 2023

Availability			Reasons for Unavailability		
Available	Unavailable	Alternative Vehicle Use	Crew/Qualifications	Defective Equipment	Other
91.80%	4.80%	3.41%	4.17%	0.27%	0.88%

Availability Breakdown



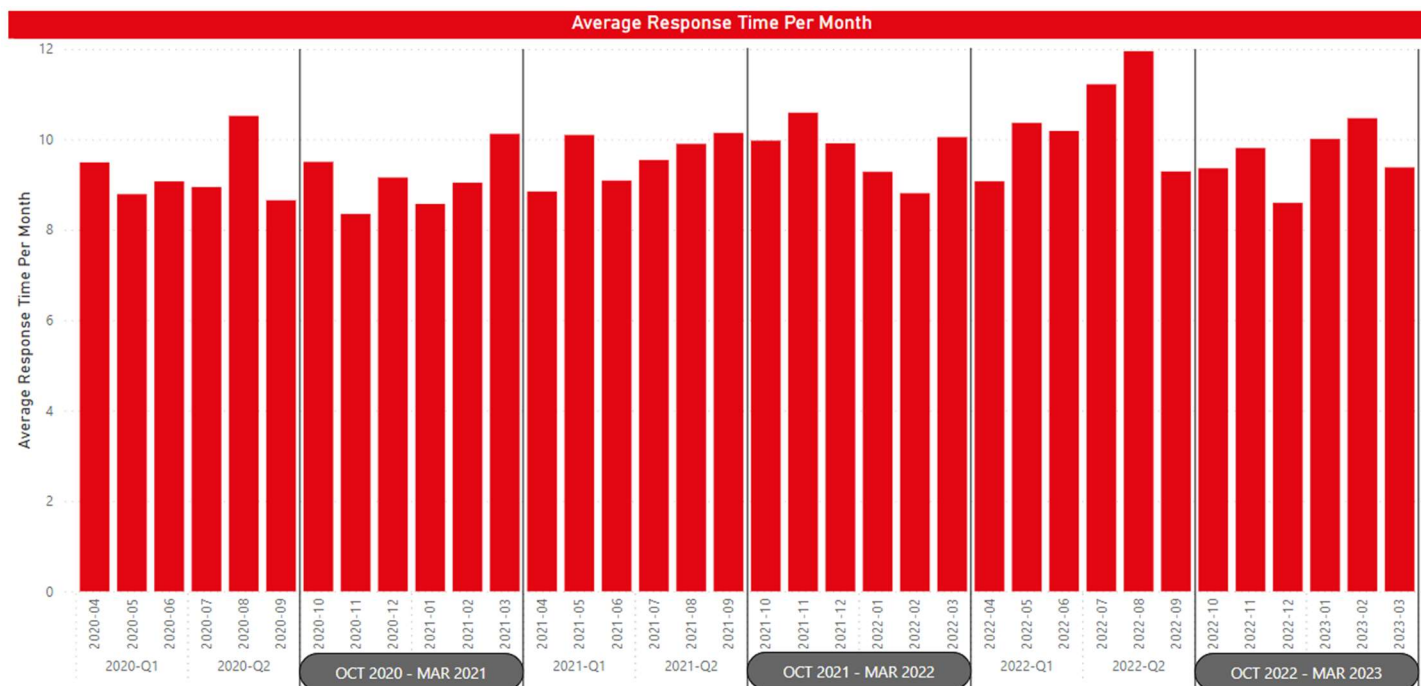
Between October 2022 and March 2023, the total Day Crewed Service availability is recorded as **91.80%**, with alternative vehicle use (not being used as a pump) contributing an additional **3.41%**. In the same period in the previous year this was recorded as **76.93%** with alternative vehicle use contributing an additional **5.74%** and between October 2020 – March 2021 this was recorded as **75.08%** with alternative vehicle use contributing an additional **2.05%**.



2.3 Service Response Times

Service response times are measured monthly and are based upon the time taken for the first fire appliance to be in attendance at an incident from the point of mobilisation by Fire Control. The Total Average response time is below, which is calculated from all fire appliances at Whole Time, Retained, and Day Crewed Fire stations that have been mobilised to incidents during the month.

Figure 7: Three Year trend of Average Service Response Time



Between October 2022 and March 2023, the average Service response time to incidents is recorded as **9 minutes 38 seconds**.

In the same period in the previous year this was recorded as **9 minutes 47 seconds** and between October 2020 – March 2021 this was recorded as **9 minutes 7 seconds**.

2.4 Service Response Standards

Response standards are based on achieving arrival at an incident within a given time using the criteria below.

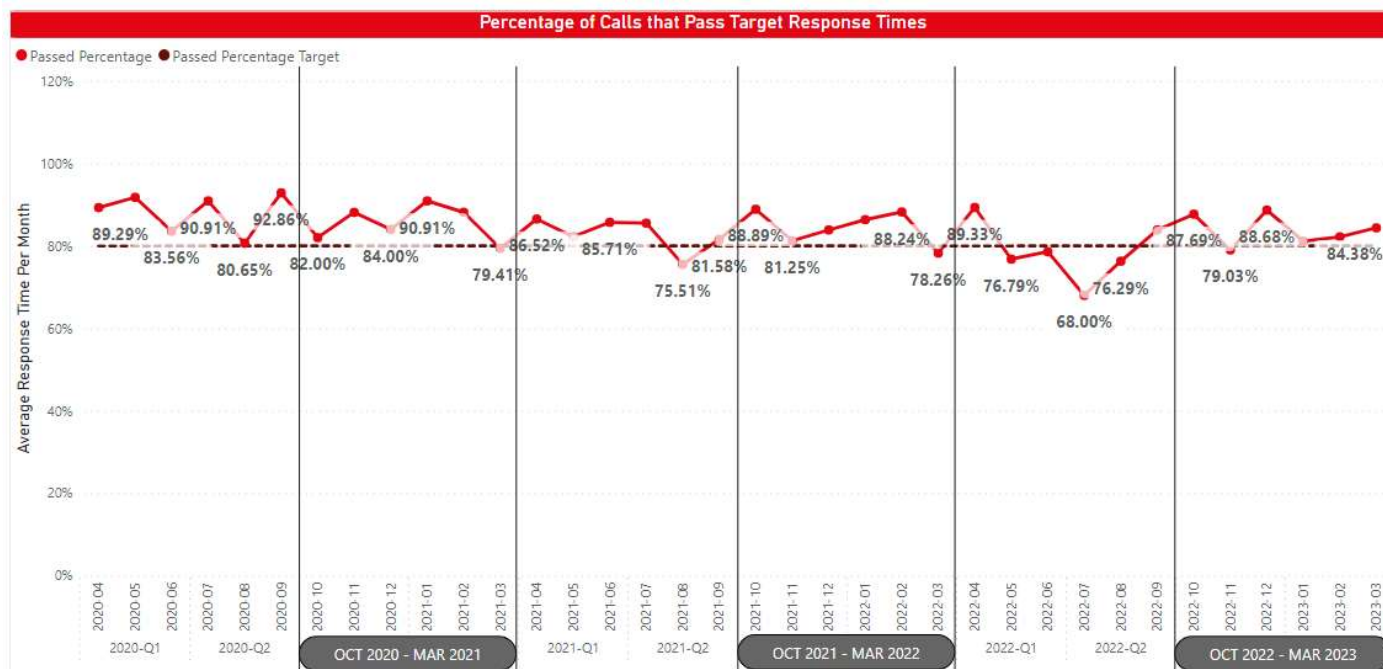
The Service looks to achieve a target of **80%** of all calls passing the target threshold for Response time within the county based upon the arrival time that is determined by the understanding of risk.

High Risk areas	Medium Risk areas	Low Risk areas
Arrival within 8 minutes	Arrival within 10 minutes	Arrival within 18 minutes

Areas of the county have been classified as High, Medium or Low risk based on a geographical analysis made up of the following factors and risk indicators:

- Frequency of life risk incidents
- Index of Multiple Deprivation factors
- Limiting Long term illness
- Population density
- Rented accommodation
- Number of Lone elderly persons & single parents

Figure 8: Three Year trend of Average Service Response Standard



Between October 2022 and March 2023, the average percentage pass rate is recorded at **84.01%**. In the same period in the previous year this was recorded as **84.70%** and between October 2020 – March 2021 this was recorded as **85.53%**.

The period of June to August 2022 was noted as a time of SPATE conditions nationally, with fire services receiving high levels of demand for attendance at secondary outdoor fires in particular during the period.



3.0 Protecting People and Places

3.1 Fire Safety Audits & Building Regulation Activity

Protection Activity

The Service completes a number of Protection activity types;

- **Fire Safety Audits**

A Fire Safety Audit is an examination of a premises and relevant documents to ascertain how the premises are being managed regarding fire safety to ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Audits are generally targeted to those premises where the occupants could be deemed at most risk should a fire occur.

- **Licensing Consultations**

Under the Licensing Act 2003 and Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the licensing authority is required to consult and give Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service the opportunity to make representation with regards to public safety (fire safety), before issuing the licence.

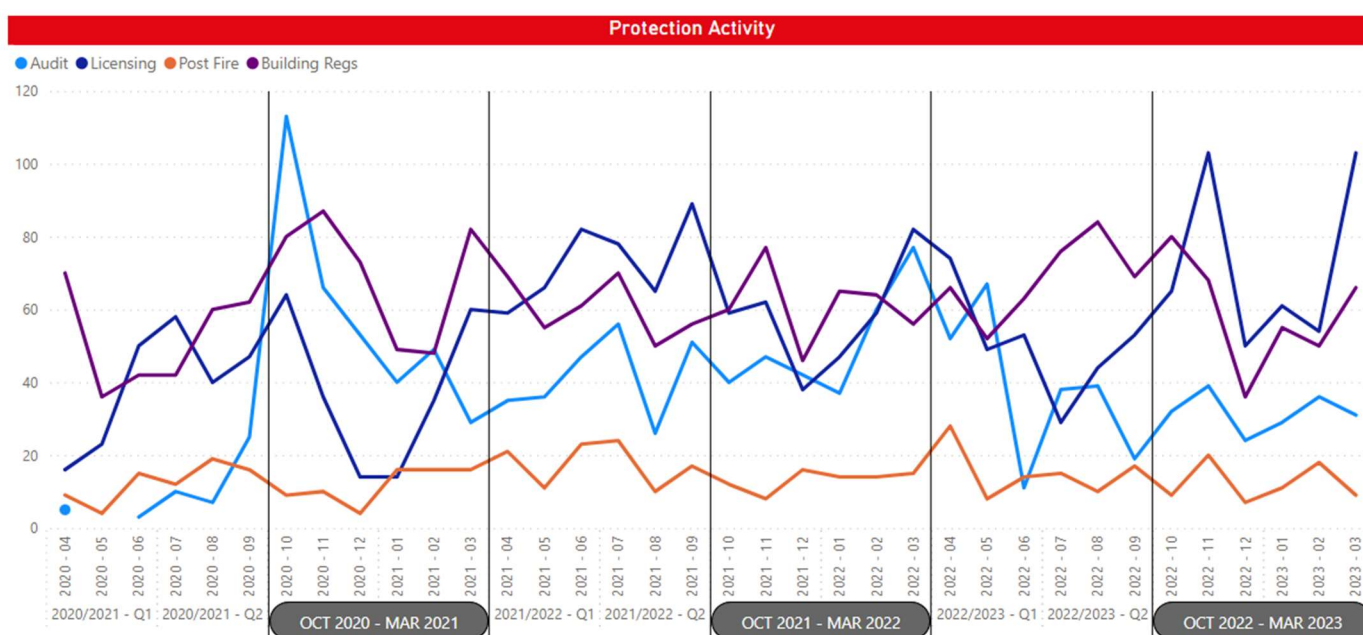
- **Building Regulation Consultations**

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service is a statutory consultee as part of the Building Regulations process. Whenever a new building is to be built or alterations are proposed to an existing building then Building Regulations approval will be required. Proposed plans for new premises and those undergoing alterations are usually sent for approval to either the local Authority Building Control department or an Approved Inspector. The proposed plans will then be passed to the local Fire and Rescue Service as a statutory for consultation where they will be checked to ensure occupants will have a suitable means of escape and that fire appliances can access the premises should they need to.

- **Post Fire Inspections**

When a fire has occurred, it may indicate a failing of some elements of fire safety within that premises. Therefore, a post fire inspection will be carried to ascertain the details of the fire, work with the business to ensure business continuity arrangements are in place, and in some cases carry out a full fire safety audit so measures can be put into place to prevent reoccurrence and ensure future compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Figure 9: Three-year trend of protection activity



The number of Fire safety Audits completed remained at a fairly consistent level through the period of October 2022 to March 2023, and although lower numbers of Audits were completed than the same time period in the previous year, this can be attributed to a notable increase in reactive demand for building regulation and licensing consultations.

Licensing consultations in particular are shown to be at their highest level in the previous 3 years. This is an area of incoming demand for the Service.

Between October 2022 and March 2023, a total of **177** fire safety audits were carried out, **364** building regulation consultations; and **412** licensing consultations were also completed.

Between April and September 2022, a total of **272** fire safety audits were carried out, **339** building regulation consultations; and **250** licensing consultations were also completed.

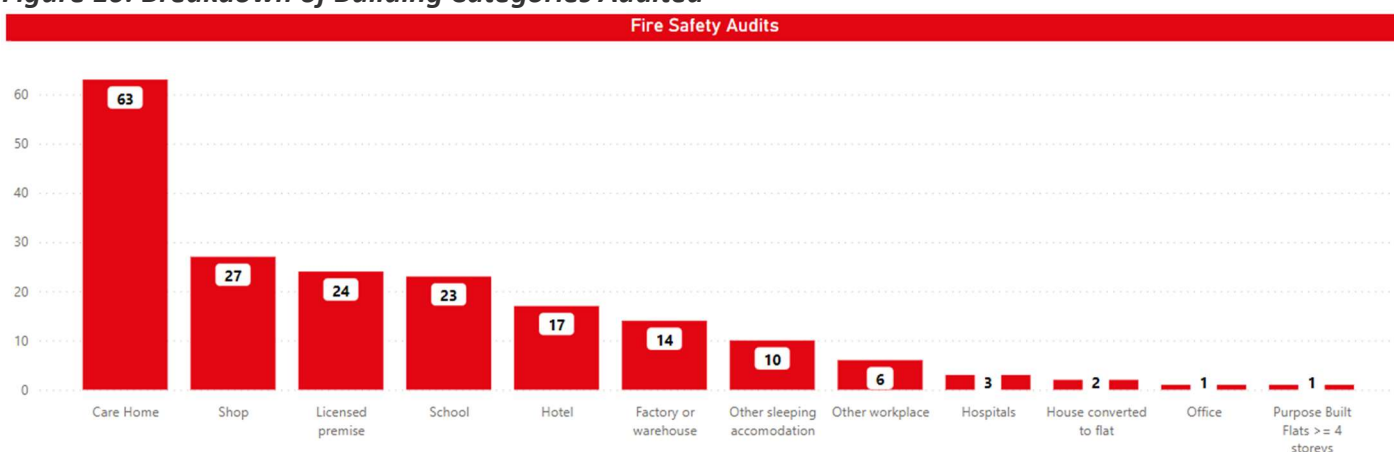
For the same time period in 2019/20 (pre-pandemic) there were **327** fire safety audits carried out, **337** building regulation consultations; and **240** licensing consultations were also completed.

Fire Safety Audits

Of the Fire Safety Audits carried out over the period, there remains a focus on ensuring that the most vulnerable people within Staffordshire communities are receiving support and assurance. Care homes and sheltered accommodation remain the most prevalent areas where Fire Safety Audits have been conducted. This is due to having limited access to these property types throughout the pandemic and the potential risk involved to vulnerable residents through fire.

The Service has recently employed **8** new Protection staff in an attempt to increase the number of fire safety audits carried out. **7** of these are undergoing their training and **1** has already qualified; which in time should see a significant increase in the output with regards to the fire safety audits completed.

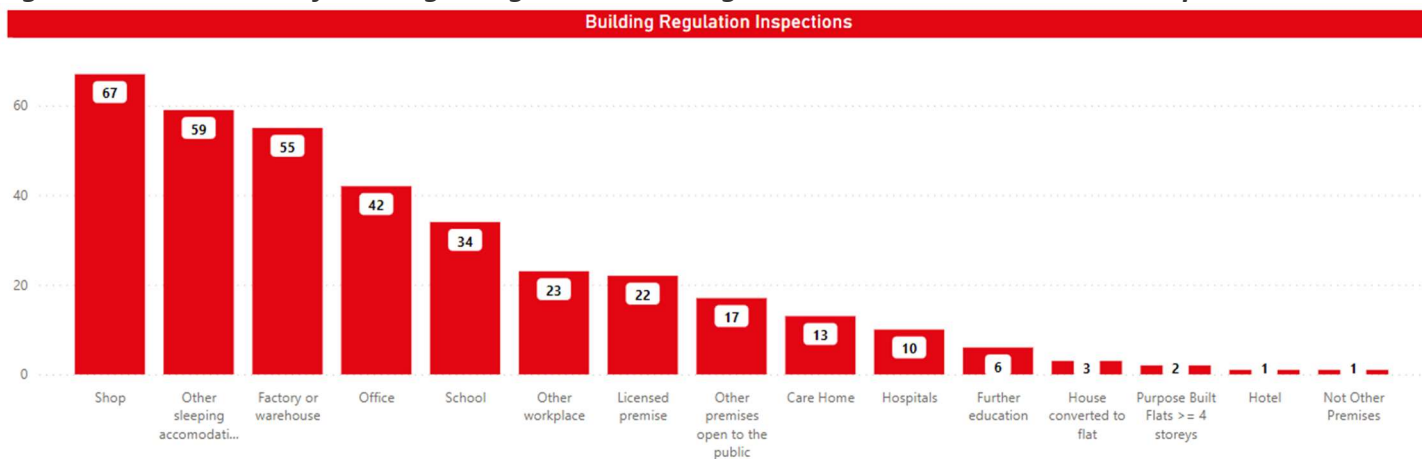
Figure 10: Breakdown of Building Categories Audited



Building Regulation Consultations Completed

Of the Building Regulation consultations carried out over the period, commercial and business premises remain the largest areas of demand.

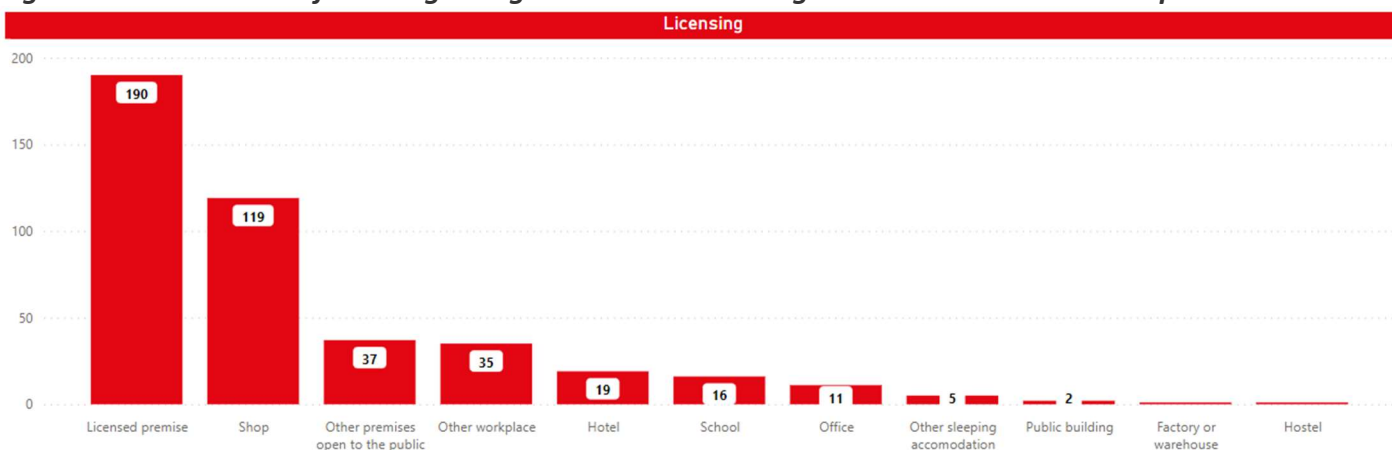
Figure 11: Breakdown of Building Categories where Regulation Consultations have taken place



Licensing Consultations Completed

Of the licensing consultations carried out over the period there are large areas of demand from licensed premises and commercial businesses.

Figure 12: Breakdown of Building Categories where Licensing Consultations have taken place

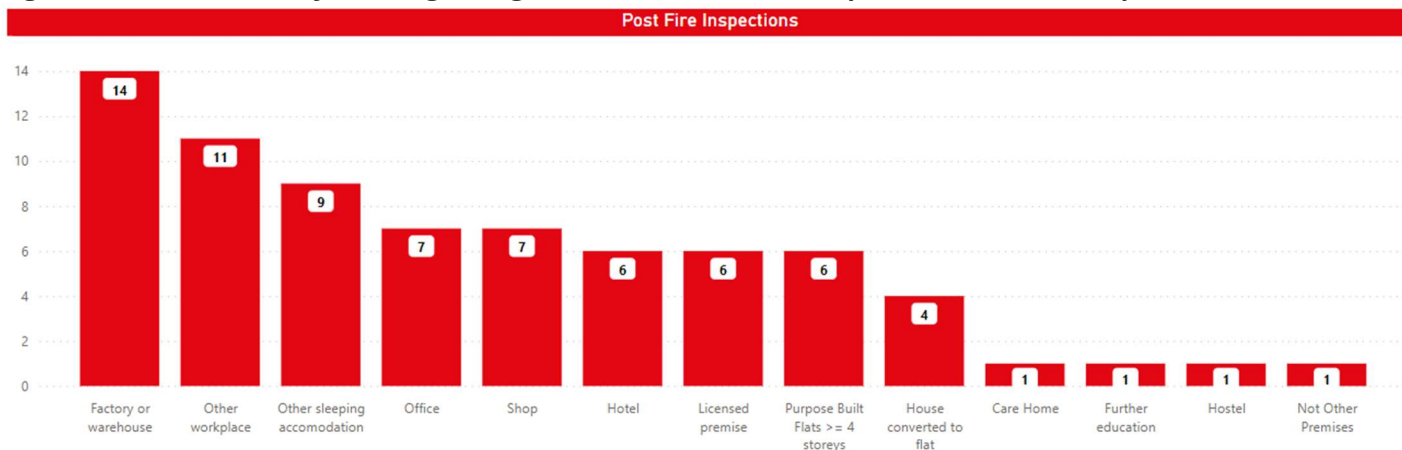


Post Fire Inspections Completed

During the time period **80%** of business fires also received a post fire inspection.

Most fires were seen in factories and warehouses, with other workplace being second followed by other sleeping accommodation. It should be noted that the majority of these fires were minor in nature and require little firefighting intervention.

Figure 13: Breakdown of Building Categories where Post Fire Inspections have taken place



Fire Safety (England) Regulations

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations listed below have now been fully adopted by the Service.

A number of plans and external wall reports for tall buildings have already been received from members of the public that manage or are responsible for high rise buildings within Staffordshire.

The Service has also been receiving and actioning any faults with regards to fixed installations within tall buildings through our Fire Protection teams.

To date the service has received plans from **56%** of its tall building stock with further work ongoing with housing providers to ensure that suitable plans are sent to the Service. A total of **12** faults have been reported since the introduction of the regulations, of which **9** have subsequently been reported as rectified.

“In all multi-occupied residential buildings, the regulations require responsible persons to provide residents with fire safety instructions and information on the importance of fire doors. The regulations apply to existing buildings, and requirements for new buildings may be different.”

In high-rise residential buildings, responsible persons will be required to:

- **Building Plans:** provide their local Fire and Rescue Service with up-to-date electronic building floor plans and to place a hard copy of these plans, alongside a single page building plan which identifies key firefighting equipment, in a secure information box on site.
- **External Wall Systems:** provide to their local Fire and Rescue Service information about the design and materials of a high-rise building’s external wall system and to inform the Fire and Rescue Service of any material changes to these walls. Also, they will be required to provide information in relation to the



level of risk that the design and materials of the external wall structure gives rise to and any mitigating steps taken.

- **Lifts and other Key Fire-Fighting Equipment:** undertake monthly checks on the operation of lifts intended for use by firefighters, and evacuation lifts in their building and check the functionality of other key pieces of firefighting equipment. They will also be required to report any defective lifts or equipment to their local Fire and Rescue Service as soon as possible after detection if the fault cannot be fixed within 24 hours, and to record the outcome of checks and make them available to residents.
- **Information Boxes:** install and maintain a secure information box in their building. This box must contain the name and contact details of the Responsible Person and hard copies of the building floor plans.
- **Wayfinding Signage:** to install signage visible in low light or smoky conditions that identifies flat and floor numbers in the stairwells of relevant buildings.

In residential buildings with storeys over 11 metres in height, responsible persons will be required to:

- **Fire Doors:** undertake annual checks of flat entrance doors and quarterly checks of all fire doors in the common parts.

In all multi-occupied residential buildings with two or more sets of domestic premises, responsible persons will be required to:

- **Fire Safety Instructions:** provide relevant fire safety instructions to their residents, which will include instructions on how to report a fire and any other instruction which sets out what a resident must do once a fire has occurred, based on the evacuation strategy for the building.
- **Fire Door Information:** provide residents with information relating to the importance of fire doors in fire safety.



3.2 Community Sprinkler Project

19 out of **42** identified blocks of flats over 5 storeys have now been fitted with sprinkler systems.

In 2017, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service identified 42 blocks of flats over 5 storeys within the county that would benefit from sprinkler systems being fitted. It was the aim of the Service to get these systems in place within a 10 year period. By March of this year work on 19 of those buildings has been completed meaning the Service is on track to meet that objective.

In late 2020 Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service also entered into collaboration with 'Midland Heart' to provide sprinklers in a number of their properties. What started as an idea to retrofit sprinklers in a single block of flats in Staffordshire turned in to a much larger project to provide sprinklers in 8 different buildings across the wider West Midlands area. The completion of the sprinkler system at Andrews House in Lichfield marked the most recent success of our Community Sprinkler Project. This 8 storey, 59 flat, block of retirement housing formed one of the original 42 premise we identified back in 2017. Andrews House is the culmination of this aspect of the project and completes our joint working with Midland Heart.

At the same time, Stoke on Trent City Council have continued their own programme of retrofitting sprinklers in all their high-rise blocks of flats with 4 systems put in place over the past year and a further 2 installations underway. They also have a new build programme in place which is building sprinklers in to new 3 storey developments such as Rialto, Beardsmore and Sutherland Courts providing a level of fire safety over and above that provided by developments adhering to the minimum legal requirements.

Stoke on Trent City Council, like many housing providers, are re-assessing their housing stock and, in particular, the provision of high-rise buildings that are soon to require either substantial refurbishment or demolition. After a period of consultation, they are moving forward with a demolition programme for 7 of their high-rise buildings and the re-provision of non-high-rise housing.

Following the completion of Andrews House, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service have taken the opportunity to reengage with local social housing providers about the benefits of sprinklers. Using our fire engineer, we are able to support housing providers by liaising with sprinkler companies, providing technical support as well as engaging with residents directly, offering advice and reassurance on the positive impact that sprinklers will have.

We are currently in discussion with a social housing provider we have worked with previously, and are considering the use of innovative technology to further improve the outcomes of sprinkler activation.



3.3 Fire Hydrants

All ten whole-time stations across Staffordshire have received face to face guidance training and are now testing hydrants within their station areas. Equipment has been supplied with the use of an electronic form to record the testing process. The information is then reflected back to the Water Manager to disseminate to the appropriate departments. Risk categorisation has been implemented into the inspection process to support future testing regimes; which will improve the ability to align this data to risk in the coming year.

5667 adopted fire hydrants have now undergone statutory testing and inspection in accordance with the requirements the Fire Services Act 2004. These hydrants are subject to an ongoing testing programme.

3419 of these adopted fire hydrants have been tested and inspected by two service Hydrant Technicians.

2216 of these inspections have been completed by the ten operational whole-time stations within the county leaving **32** inspections completed by the four on call stations in the west of the county Wombourne, Codsall, Brewood and Kinver as part of the Roving Resources Project.

Figure 14: Hydrant Risk Categories and Inspection Schedule

Risk Category	Inspection Schedule	Risk Factor / Property Type
Very High	12 months	Risk Area Very High / Identified High Silt areas.
High	36 months	Residential – High Risk Area Semi / Detached / Terrace / Mobile / Flat / Apartment / Maisonette Village Halls / Places of Public Entertainment / Sports Grounds / Community Facilities / Shopping Complexes / Primary Schools / Secondary Schools / Colleges / Universities / Nurseries / Farms / Agricultural / Animal Boarding Kennels / Animal Rescue Centres / Industrial Parks / Warehouses / Laboratories / Office Buildings / Multi Storey Car Parks / Service Stations / Transport Stations Hospitals / Care Homes
Medium	60 months	Residential - Low Risk Area Semi / Detached / Terrace
Low	84 months	Rural Areas non-residential

4.0 Helping people most at risk from Fire

4.1 Safe and Well Visits

7034 Safe and Well visits have been completed between 1st October 2022 and 31st March 2023. During this period, there has been an increase in the number of Safe and Well visits completed by the Service. The number of visits completed has notably increased by **1080** from the previous six-month period. (April 2022 – September 2022).

Operational Crews continue to complete their daily prevention activity, working on a combination of their risk profile lists (targeted Safe and Well visits to vulnerable members of our communities, over the age of 80; data which has been collated by our Risk Planning Team) and pre-booked appointments, received through the Contact Centre.

The Contact Centre continue to manage our Safe and Well booking procedures, with Business Support Teams supporting in some areas. The team are also trialling the new PPHMS system, which requires them to work on 2 different booking systems whilst maintaining business as usual, whilst conducting the testing.

Safe and Well technicians continue to deliver COVID-19 anti-viral medication to members of the community, when requested through our Contact Centre. The Service are also assisting Staffordshire County Council with a ‘Winter Warmth’ project; working with the Government to help people manage their utility bills. As well as completing a Safe and Well visit for the vulnerable person, the Service can then refer them on for a Household Support Grant to support their energy usage.

Figure 15: Three-year trend of Safe and Well Visits



4.2 Prince's Trust Activity

98 young people have been supported by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service through our Prince's Trust Programmes 'Team' 'Get Started' and 'Explore'. In the last six-month period, the anticipated rise in recruitment numbers are now beginning to be reflected towards pre-pandemic levels.

2022 into 2023 continued with staff shortages, although both Team Cannock and Stafford ran independently from October. A new Team Programme Leader for Stafford is in place, and full training alongside support is being provided from experienced staff.

Following the Team move from Stone to Stafford, the numbers and interest has increased significantly. A real positive has been that SFRS firefighters are engaging and supporting the program in multiple ways.

We continue to explore the potential of a seconded police officer working alongside our Princes Trust teams, having presented to Staffordshire Police's ACC. Whilst also developing a partnership with our probation services through the south of the county, presenting to their teams and discussing the suitability of any young individual that might want to join our program.

More recently our existing partners have become more involved again following the pandemic. All of these actions are having a positive impact, which is demonstrated through the increase in numbers of young people joining the programmes. The probation services are also keen to engage.

Below is a full list of the completed and future programmes we have delivered/ planned:

TEAM: Cannock 2022/23 Oct – Mar

- 31st October 2022 – 3rd February 2023, 6 young people
- 6th March 2023 – 2nd June 2023, currently on week 5 with 10 young people

GET STARTED: 2022/23 Oct – Mar

- Get Started with Creative Theatre, October 2022, 11 young people
- Get Started with Film Production, Feb 2023, 12 young people
- Get Started with Music Production, March 2023, 9 young people

TEAM: Stafford 2022/23 Oct – Mar

- 7th November 2022 – 3rd February 2023, 10 young people
- 20th March 2023 – 16th June 2023, currently on week 3 with 16 young people

EXPLORE: RUGELEY 2022/23 Oct – Mar

- Explore 10: 26th September – 28th October, 8 young people
- Explore 11: 21st November – 23rd December, 8 young people
- Explore 12: 27th March – 19th April, 8 young people

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Princes Trust will run a minimum of 12 programmes throughout the next twelve months in conjunction with the Prince's Trust, reaching an estimated **150** young people who will be supported through our programmes.

- **Stafford Community Fire Station – Prince's Trust 'Team'**, 3 times a year with an approximate 14 young people on each programme
- **Cannock Community Fire Station – Prince's Trust 'Team'**, 3 times a year with an approximate 14 young people on each programme
- **Get Started** – 6 programmes per year, with an approximate 10 young people on each programme



4.3 Education Update

Safe+Sound

Safe+Sound aims to support communities to make informed and positive lifestyle choices, improving their health, safety and wellbeing.

Each weekly programme is broadcast live at 10am on a Wednesday (term time only) and is then available on demand.

Between October 2022 and March 2023;

- **184,081** total devices viewed the programmes of which **71,041 (38.6%)** were based in Staffordshire
- The highest week was 29th March with **10,329** devices, of which **3,598 (34.3%)** were based in Staffordshire.
- The highest Staffordshire weekly figure was **3,792** in a week of **8,915 (42.5%)** were based in Staffordshire

In March 2023 we delivered face to face at Sandyford Fire Station to **481** Year 5/6 children and **42** adults from **9** schools. The workshops were;

- **Fire Safety in the Home** - Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
- **What to do in an Emergency** – Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
- **Water Safety** – Canal and River Trust
- **Trucks and Child Safety** – Hawkins Logistics/DHL
- **Money Sense** – HSBC

The Education Team also works closely with the **Staffordshire Safer Roads partnership (SSRP)** when planning Safe+Sound events for young drivers. Events are primarily delivered in areas identified as having a high number of young people involved in collisions, or having a high risk of collisions.

The most recent event was at Sandyford Fire Station on 20th March.

40 young people from Newcastle and Stafford College attended workshops including;

- **Hazard perception** (immersive and interactive – delivered in the Safe+Sound Pod) – delivered by SSRP
- **What to do in a road emergency** (including CPR, use of a defibrillator etc.) – delivered by SFRS
- **Basic vehicle maintenance** – delivered by SFRS
- **Drugs, alcohol and driving** – delivered by Staffordshire Police.

Uniformed Public Services

This academic year we are looking at a consistent offer across the service for students attending college throughout the County and studying Uniformed Public Services courses. Working with the Positive Action Officer and several Station Managers; this will build on the existing work already being done in some areas and deliver in areas where no current links exist. Our first Uniformed Public Services event took place in April 2023 and was a great success. Workshops were conducted over a four-day period with groups of students attending for half a day's input.

Topics covered in the workshops included:

- **The role of the On-Call Fire Fighter** – a chance to discover more about the role of the on-call Firefighter, how the on-call system works, how to get involved; and much more.



- **RTC demonstration (Road Traffic Collision)** - the Road Traffic Collision (RTC) workshop gave students an insight into the process that crews have to go through from start to finish at an incident. Encompassing initial attendance and what to look out for, to finally extricating a casualty in a safely and timely manner.
- **The Apprenticeship route** – this session provided students an opportunity to find out how the FF Apprenticeship works, what it involves and how it is delivered.
- **Role of Hazardous Materials Advisor workshop** – An opportunity to find out more about the HMA team; a cohort of 12 Station and Group Managers who have undertaken specialist training, they then fulfil an operational role at incidents involving hazardous substances.

Approximately **400** students attend the event across the four-day period from Newcastle College (NSCG), Stoke College, Stoke 6th Form College, Stafford College (NSCG) and Burton and South Derbyshire College.

Volunteers

We currently have **59** volunteers Service wide.

Between October and March our volunteers contributed a total of **2061.75** hours to the service.

Our volunteer teams have attended many events and taken part in activities including:

- Cars in the park
- Leek Show
- County show
- Fire station open days
- Memorial garden
- Supporting the living alone campaign
- Cubs, Brownies, Beavers station visits
- Chaplains have continued to support across the service
- Pride across many areas
- Uniformed Public Services visit
- Sandyford Safe+Sound event
- Charity Car Washes
- L&D – Drama Queens
- 3 -5 pump exercises local stations
- Gardening/ green Peace projects
- Canteen (SHQ) support

Business Support

Fire safety assistance has been provided for the directors and trustees of the Apedale Colliery Heritage Centre. We have worked with the heritage centre for a number of years and supported the great work this community project carries out.

Business Support Leads (BSL) attended the Enterprise and Education Conference in October 2022 the culmination of the work delivered in supporting schools with the education of school leavers getting ready to enter the world of work. BSL is the appointed Enterprise Advisor for Endon High School.

BSL attended the Rural Forum (Staffs Chamber Initiative) all things economic and educational for the rural commercial community hosted by Rodbaston Colleague and Chaired by Director arcus Roberts

BSL have also attended educational conference and open day (Westwood and Leek High Schools) schools leavers educational day meeting emergency services, Police, Military, Ambulance and industry leaders.

Partnership development is underway with the National Farmers Union, providing support and education for fire safety in the rural sector.

Fire safety education was delivered to **80** students at Rodbaston agricultural college; forming part of their core studies curriculum.



OFSTED Inspection Programme – Firefighter Apprenticeships

When delivering government funded learning programmes, all learning providers are required to create a self-assessment review and quality improvement plan. These are then submitted to OFSTED annually. The Service's plan is signed off by a member of the senior management team who's reference and responsibility is Learning and Development.

The plan's aim is to address areas that the Service has identified that require improvement and to maintain the high standards required to deliver a good apprenticeship programme. Progress is monitored through bi-monthly Internal Quality Assessor Standardisation Meetings where the plan sits as a standing agenda item.

The Service currently has **40** Firefighters on the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship programme, **17** of which have undergone an external end-point-assessment in March.

A further **16** will pass through internal gateway checks in the Autumn before being recommended for end-point-assessment in November.

A third cohort of **7** will progress similarly towards end point assessment in June 2024.

The Apprenticeship Programme runs for approximately 2 years and the learners receive structured training, coaching and development to equip them for the role of a competent operational firefighter at Level 3.

The Service has undergone a full Inspection regarding our Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship provision in May 2022

The results of this inspection have now been published and the Service has been awarded an overall judgement of 'Good' for apprenticeships, with some 'Outstanding' areas of note within the Education Inspection Framework for 'Behaviour and Attitudes' and 'Personal Development'.

Overall Effectiveness	Good
The Quality of Education	Good
Behaviour and Attitudes	Outstanding
Personal Development	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Good
Apprenticeships	Good



5.0 A Fire & Rescue Service for Tomorrow

5.1 Climate Change Environmental Protection Strategy

Since we launched the new Environmental Strategy in January 2022, we've seen momentum building and individuals across the service contributing to some excellent green initiatives. We still face challenges in our journey to reduce our carbon footprint, but it is positive that there has been a reduction in the Carbon Footprint noted in the annual 2022/23 report.

The total carbon footprint for SFRS has reduced by 51 metric tonnes since 2021/22.

- Business Miles have increased, producing **1 tonne CO2e more** than 2021/22.
- Electricity Usage has decreased, producing **20 tonnes less CO2e** than in 2021/22.
- Purchased diesel has increased, producing **37 tonnes CO2e more** than 2021/22.
- Gas usage has decreased, producing **69 tonnes less CO2e** than 2021/22.

Here's a quick update on the projects we've been working on recently:

Greenspaces/Increasing Biodiversity

- Planting of a wildflower summer meadow took place on land at Stone Fire Station on Tuesday 21st March, in conjunction with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and St Dominic's Catholic Primary. The WSDG Business Support team have worked in conjunction with Estates and Comms to identify and prepare the area along with a number of educational sign boards.
- SFRS are currently awaiting the arrival of a bee hive at Stafford which will be hosted by SFRS and maintained by the South Staffordshire and District Beekeepers Association. All plans have been finalised and the association are currently awaiting suitable weather conditions during which to transport the hive, when the bees will be dormant.
- It is hoped to extend these measures out to further locations in due course in order to increase pollinators and promote improved biodiversity at our sites, should the partnerships prove viable.
- Early plans for a promotional campaign on indoor office plants and air quality to coincide with the onset of autumn 2023.
- Ideas have been discussed regarding the distribution of wildflower seed packs to staff to encourage planting in private domestic properties, following the packs given out at the International Women's Day Event on 8th March.

Fleet Electrification

- The tender process had been completed regarding the charging points which will be sited at – Joint Emergency Transport Services (JETS) and SFRS HQ initially, with Sandyford to follow.
- The measurement of electric vehicle mileage and reduction in fossil fuel will be implemented for inclusion in the carbon accounting process currently being developed.
- The service has approached a vehicle manufacturer regarding a trial of a fully-electric emergency vehicle conversion by the manufacturer (subject to availability). It is hoped to produce a video diary in conjunction with Comms in order to raise awareness and start the conversation around electrification of the blue light fleet.



Carbon Accounting and Measures

- Carbon footprint for the Service is now monitored and results are provided via an annual report.
- Estates, the joint Sustainability Lead, and the Performance and Assurance team are working together to introduce measures around waste and utility usage across the estate. Waste data to be included in carbon footprint baseline and the group is looking at how best this information can be made visible to the workforce and included in performance meetings.
- The Sustainability Lead is looking at opportunities for cross-working between Police and Fire on environmental matters.
- A dedicated environment and sustainability Teams channel is now established to allow for easier information sharing between group members.

Comms and Awareness

Video updates agreed in the following areas in order to raise awareness and promote discussion:

- Waste reduction & updated recycling process
- Reducing energy usage across the organisation
- Air quality improvements and fleet electrification
- Operational equipment procurement
- Green space generation (wildflower meadow and consideration of similar initiatives at other sites)

5.2 Enhanced Rescue Pumps (ERP's)

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service took the decision to procure two new Enhanced Rescue Pumps (ERP's) as part of the replacement program for existing vehicles. This was based upon a decision made through the transformation work to remove the current Rescue Tender from Longton. The concept is to have a pump rescue ladder with enhanced rescue capability – hence the 'Enhanced Rescue Pump'.

These new vehicles will be located at Stafford and Longton stations.

To enable the service to provide a resilient operational response for incidents requiring technical rescue capabilities the requirement for Enhanced Rescue Pumps has been based on current and foreseeable risk within Staffordshire. An analysis of previous incidents and incident types attended has also been conducted.

The Enhanced Rescue Pump project has made good progress over the past 6 months. A consultation exercise with operational crews has been carried out and a detailed specification written, taking into account the feedback, which led to a robust tender process being conducted.

The chassis order for both appliances was placed August 2022. Due to global parts shortage we are expecting a 12-month lead time which will be followed by a 20-week body build. Delivery to Staffordshire is expected to be April 2024. The appliances will be the latest version of the Advanced Technology (AT) and will include features which surpass any front-line appliance currently in the Service.



Cabs and lockers will incorporate features helping the move towards a ‘Clean Cab concept’ in Staffordshire. These include:

- The removal of Breathing Apparatus (BA) sets and other equipment, which could bring contaminants from the fire ground, from the crew cab area. These will be stored within an easily accessible locker
- Easily cleanable and contaminant reducing surfaces and materials in the crew cab design
- Filtered air-conditioning within all areas of the vehicle cab

A Premarket Engagement Day as part of the project for purchasing a ‘Battery Powered Hydraulic Rescue Tool’ has taken place. 3 suppliers attended and discussed the features and innovations available.

A collaborative tendering process is now due to take place with West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Staffordshire to reduce costs by sharing resources on the practical evaluations and potentially gain a better deal through purchasing in greater quantities. The Emergency Response Teams (ERT) and commercial services are working together to purchase two sets of Heavy Rescue hydraulic equipment. This selection will be through a number of criteria but a practical crew engagement exercise will be carried out to ensure there are no unforeseen issues before placing the order.

An evaluation has recently been completed on improved high-pressure airbags with 3 suppliers providing demonstration sets and a practical demonstration at an International Road Rescue & Trauma Consultancy (IRRTC) event for crews to fully utilise equipment on large vehicles and provide feedback. Evaluation data has now been collated, quotes submitted and there is work being done in conjunction with commercial services to purchase two sets.

Trials of a number of models of battery powered positive Pressure Ventilation fans have been carried out. The best performing fan has been identified and quotes have been sought. Two battery PPV fans will be purchased within the period.

Rosenbauer UK visited Longton community fire Station to view the current Rescue Tender. Whilst there they met station leads from Stafford and Longton to discuss ideas and concerns around BA being stored in vehicle lockers. A preliminary stowage exercise has been undertaken.

Relocating the BA sets has meant hose reels will be in the rear lockers. This has caused a slight cost increase in cost as wheel arch steps now need to be fitted so that middle lockers can be used.

Heavy Vehicle supports/lifting/shoring will be the next high value procurement exercise for the ERP’s. The ongoing equipment evaluation and procurement ensures the ERP’s will be capable of attending technical rescue incidents. In addition to the current capability crews will have specialist training, and will be better equipped, to carry out rescues from heavy goods vehicles, train carriages or similar incident types.



5.3 Collaborative Shared Estates

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service has a building portfolio consisting of **35** premises. The portfolio consists of **21** Private Finance Initiative (PFI) buildings and **14** residual buildings. The PFI buildings are split across 2 outsourced contracts which are managed from within the Estates Team; one contract consists of 10 buildings, whilst the other PFI contract is made up of 11 buildings. The remaining 14 residual buildings are maintained by an in-house facilities management team within the Estates Team.

The Estates Team have just completed the Abbots Bromley Fire Station refurbishment project and are now in the final design stage for Brewwood Fire Station refurbishment.

Once Brewwood Fire Station design stage has been completed Tutbury Fire Station refurbishment design will be looked at and then all site major project refurbishments will have been completed.

In line with the major refurbishment programme there are a number of other investment programmes being carried out across all residual fire stations to ensure buildings are continually maintained to a standard and facilities are fit for purpose. Last financial year saw the Estates Team deliver circa **£700,000** worth of investment to many Fire Residual sites across various project streams, this financial year (23/24) the team are aiming on delivering circa **£1million+** worth of investment within the Fire Residual Estate.

Staffordshire Fire Service and the Estates team are committed to further reducing their carbon footprint in particular within the building portfolio, currently the Estates Team are working with Commercial Services in the procurement of a consultancy practise to explore the viability of installing solar panels at our headquarters site at Pirehill. In addition to this we will soon be installing 8 Electric Vehicle charging points to various sites to enable an electrical vehicle pilot to be undertaken. The intention is to learn from the data we receive from the Pilot to then review the scalability of such a project across the wider estate.

The Estates Team are working closely with the Staffordshire Commissioners office to build upon the current successful collaborative building projects recently undertaken at Hanley Fire&Police Station and Tamworth Fire&Police Station which sees Staffordshire Fire and Staffordshire Police working together and co-locating within the same building. Last financial year saw Chase Terrace Fire&Police Station added to the ever-growing list with further opportunities being explored at Uttoxeter, Kidsgrove, Stone, Kinver and Penkridge stations.

The Estates Team are committed to utilising the building portfolio to explore further collaborative opportunities between both Fire and Police as well as other public body organisations.



6.0 Emerging Issues

6.1 Climate Change and Extreme Weather Conditions

2022 saw the UK's first ever red weather warning as heatwave temperatures soared to 40.3 degrees, the highest ever recorded in Britain. The Met Office advises that climate change is likely to mean hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. Extreme events such as heatwaves and heavy rainfall could become more frequent and intense meaning more flooding and wildfires, thus having a direct impact on our frontline services.

In 2020, Staffordshire experienced significant flooding which impacted communities across the county. Nationally, some of the worst flooding conditions in the last 20 years were recorded over this period. Storms such as Ciara, Malik and Eunice ripped through the UK in February 2020 leaving roads blocked, residential dwellings flooded, affected power and water services to homes, and sadly caused loss of life. Storm Eunice was reported to have wind speeds of 122mph, making it the worst storm in decades according to The Met Office. Storms like these will no doubt become more prevalent due to the impact of climate change.

Extreme weather conditions have also been experienced in particular over the second quarter of 2022, with SPATE conditions being observed nationally for many Fire Services due to the significant and sustained increase in the number of incidents over this period.

Between April and September 2022 within Staffordshire; an increased demand of **46.67%** was noted for the number of Secondary Fires attended in the same period in 2021, and a **64.86%** increase is noted from the number of incidents attended in the same period from 2019.

In 2022 Staffordshire has recorded **21** 'wildfires', with **13** of these incidents requiring 5 or more fire appliances to be in attendance.

15 of these incidents also involved an area of fire damage of over 200 square meters.

This brings a significant challenge to the Service in resourcing additional demand throughout periods of seasonal trend change.

Considerations are not only limited to front line crews, but to the Service as a whole. Areas such as risk and contingency planning, reviewing and adapting operational training requirements and allocation of resources, and engaging with the communities of Staffordshire and border Services are essential components of preparing for future periods of unpredictable and extreme weather conditions.

Another area of importance is the introduction of equipment and technology that can improve our flexibility to respond. Kinver Fire Station is equipped with a 4x4 ranger vehicle, featuring a 656ft wildfire hose, backpacks and a high-pressure blower on board to enable crews to deal with serious wildfires. The vehicle can also be converted to extract water to assist in responding to flood incidents.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service are taking a proactive approach to climate change and we are monitoring our own Environmental and Sustainability Strategy, which sets out plans for Staffordshire to work towards carbon neutrality as a Service and to ensure environmental concerns are embedded in all future considerations.



7.0 HR Performance Update

7.1 Recruitment Activity

Between October 2022 and March 2023, the following activity has taken place:

17 Support roles have been filled

15 Operational roles have been filled

2 Individuals are currently at Pre-Employment/Offer stage

8 Roles are currently out for advertisement

22 Firefighters commenced within On-Call on the 20-week training plan (With 13 more On-Call Firefighters joining us on 27th April)

FTE Headcount Report

FTE Headcount Summary as at 31st March 2023

	Last Month At 28 February 2023	This Month At 31 March 2023	Actual Movement in Period	Budget 2022-23	Variance Budget to Actual
Management Team	13.0	13.0		12.0	(1.0)
Station Managers	22.0	22.0		21.0	(1.0)
Watch Managers	58.0	56.0	(2.0)	65.0	9.0
Crew Managers	46.0	44.0	(2.0)	40.0	(4.0)
Wholetime FF	157.9	158.6	0.7	162.0	3.4
Wholetime FF - Casual Contracts	6.0	6.0			(6.0)
	302.9	299.6	(3.3)	300.0	0.4
On-Call FF	252.3	246.3	(6.0)	387.0	140.7
Support Staff	129.2	130.5	1.3	147.7	17.2
<u>Secondments / Funded Posts</u>	13.6	13.6		7.0	(6.6)
TOTAL HEADCOUNT	698.0	689.9	(8.0)	841.7	151.8

This report shows headcount as FTE's (Full Time Equivalent)



7.2 Workforce Diversity

Diversity within Recruitment

The following information is taken from applicants applying for positions within the service:

367 Total applications received between **1st October 2022 – 31st March 2023**

4% Ethnic Minority and **2%** Prefer not to say/not stated

19% Female and **9.5%** Prefer not to say/not stated

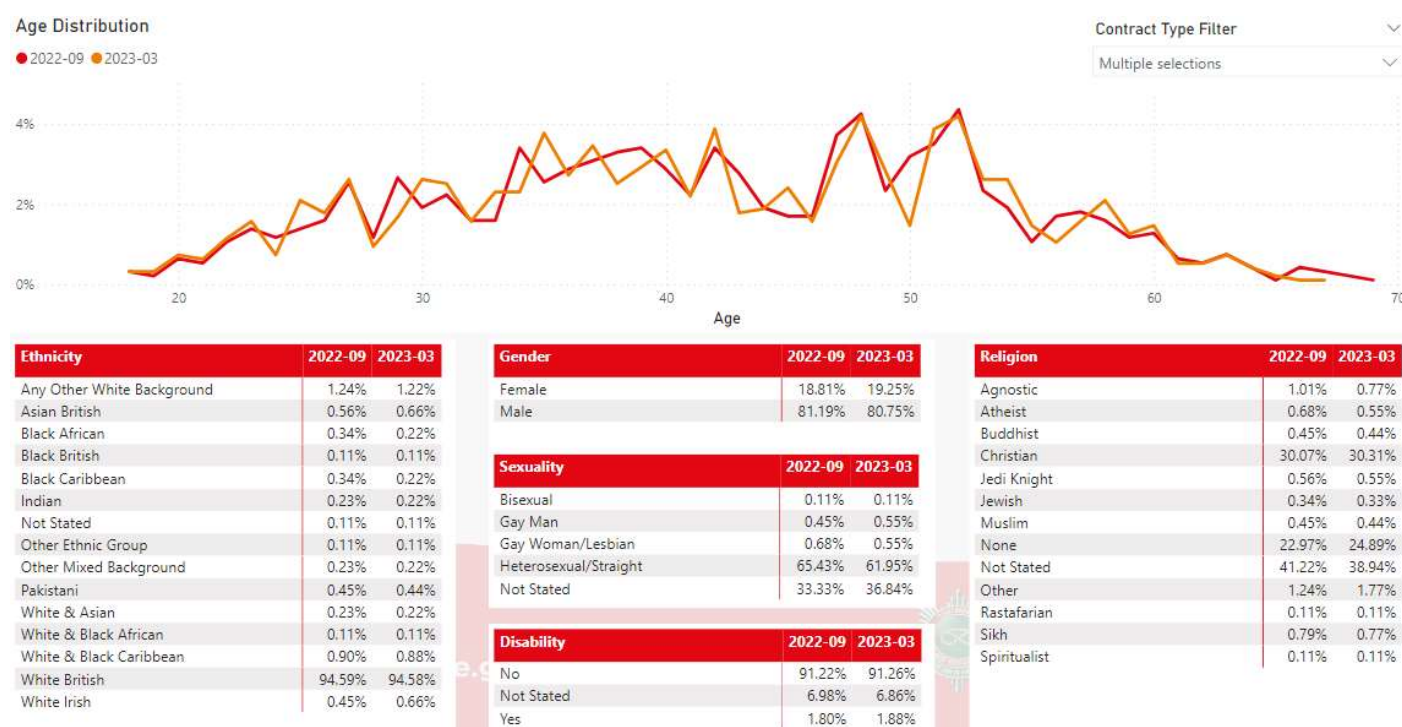
5.4% Declared disability and **1.3%** Prefer not to say/not stated

8% LGBTQ+ and **5.7%** Prefer not to say/not stated

Workforce Diversity Profile

The chart below displays the workforce diversity position as at September 2022 and March 2023 for all Whole Time, Retained, and Support staff including Principal Officers. These charts are based upon declared data collected during the recruitment and on boarding process. This data is provided voluntarily by individuals.

Figure 16: Workforce Diversity September 2022 – March 2023



Since September 2022, the percentage of Female employees across Whole-Time/Retained/Support Staff/Principle Officers (collectively) has increased from **18.81%** in September 2022 to **19.25%** in March 2023. (This equates to **166** persons identifying as Female in 2022, to **173** persons identifying as Female in March 2023 – an increase of an additional **7** persons identifying as Female over the time period)

Also, since September 2022, the percentage of persons with disabilities has increased from **1.80%** in September 2022 to **1.88%** in March 2023. (This equates to **1** additional person that has joined the service and has self-identified as having a disability.)

As an employer we have recruited a Positive Action Coordinator who is actively encouraging applications from underrepresented groups in the Staffordshire area, by visiting local schools and recruitment events we are starting to build up a database of people who are keen to work with us and to provide support where needed for applicants. This role is also working closely with the fitness advisor to look at how we can support individuals joining the Service.

In addition:

- Corporate Communications are working with us to ensure that media circulated from the Service is appealing to a wider demographic.
- Work is well underway to support the recruitment of Whole Time Fire Fighters when we start recruitment in October 2023 with a further communication campaign scheduled to run alongside this.
- Regular Work Force Planning Boards are becoming pertinent to keeping positive engagement strategies on track. This includes looking at a review of the Facilities available at HQ to make a more diverse demographic feel welcomed and part of the Service.
- Steps are being taken to provide more Networks and we are in the early stages of recently starting a Women's Group and a Menopause Group.
- Joined with our Police Colleagues to be part of International Women's Day which had the added benefit of including awareness of disabilities and how we can support.
- We are currently working closely with Occupational Health to provide a more holistic approach to our current employees which we will be able to use to provide support to new employees and to positively advertise.
- We are currently completing the Mental Health at Work Commitment. This includes the reinvigoration of the Induction to include elements to support mental health and the development of a Neurodiversity Support Group and additional training of Dyslexia Assessors.
- A Wellbeing Conference was held in April, with the aim of providing awareness to our Wellness Champions of the support mechanisms that are already currently available and the training of Mental Health First Aiders is due to commence in the next couple of months.



7.3 Workforce Sickness

Figure 17: Total Lost Days of Sickness by Type October 2022 – March 2023

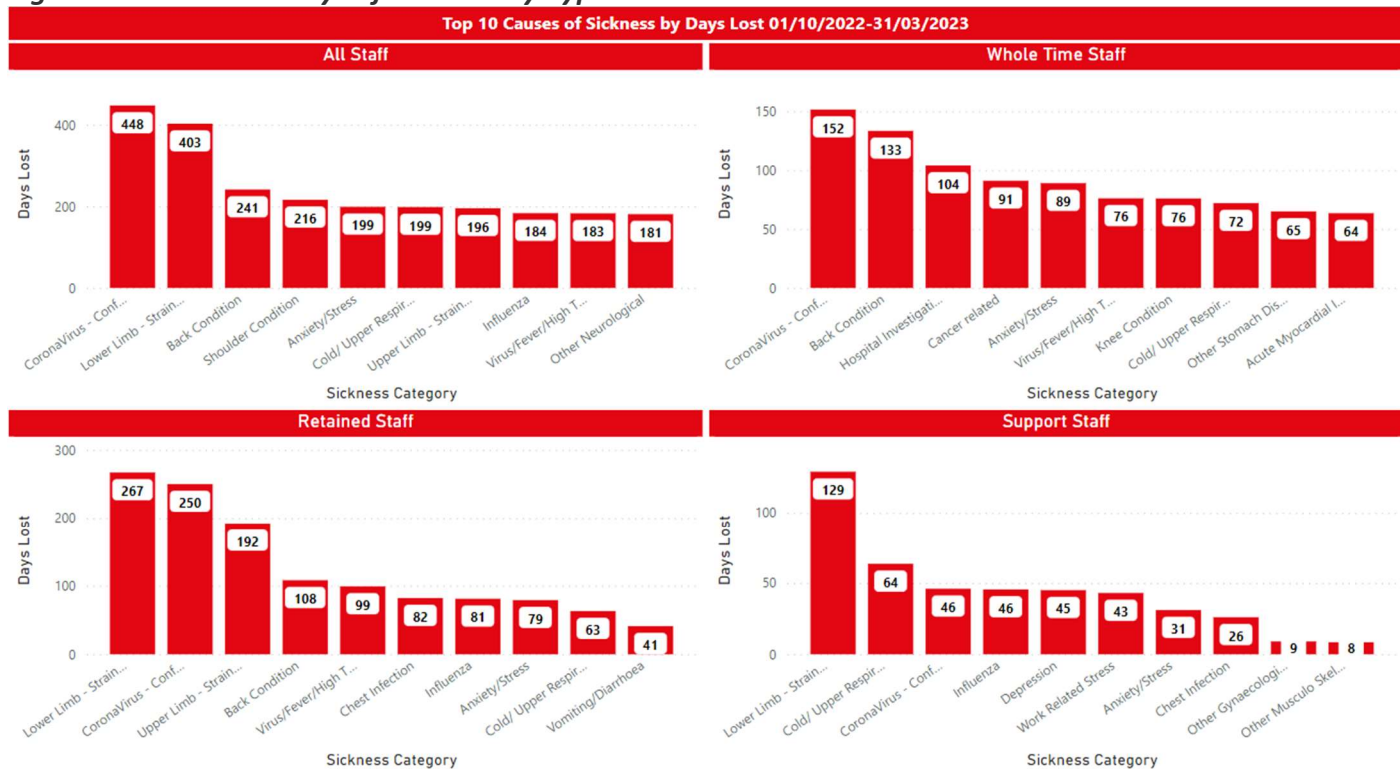
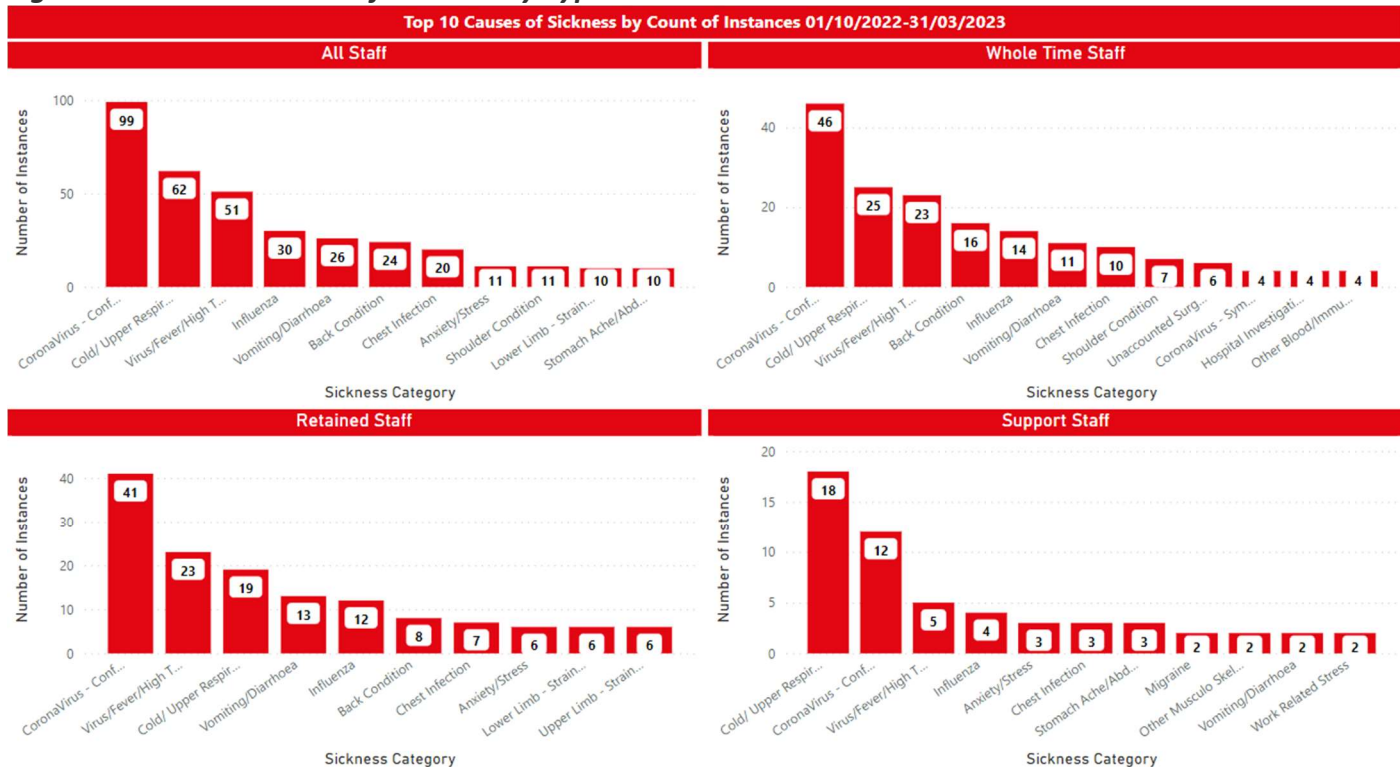


Figure 18: Total Instances of Sickness by Type October 2022 – March 2023



- Between October 2022 and March 2023 Sickness Absence has continued to reduce across the board from the previous six-month period.
 - Staffordshire Fire and Rescue rank **8th** out of **34** Fire Services reviewed nationally when comparing working days/shifts lost for Wholetime Firefighters with an average of **4.74%** days/shifts lost between October 2022 to March 2023. The average across the data from other Fire Services is **6.4%**.
 - In the same period, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services Green book employees (support staff) rank **19th** out of **34** Fire Services with **3.67%** working days/shifts lost to sickness. This is in the median range with the average being **3.7%**.
 - Coronavirus continues to be the main cause of sickness absence with Wholetime Firefighters which is consistent across the previous two quarters. Coronavirus has contributed to **18.28%** of lost days/shifts across all employees within the Service.
 - Lower Limb injuries have proportionally increased this period becoming the main cause for sickness absence for On Call Firefighters and Support Employees between October 2022 to March 2023.
 - Initiatives such as wellbeing walks, yoga sessions and other activities have been implemented with a focus on publishing material to support Stress Awareness Month in April. Stress and Anxiety is **5th** main cause of sickness absence across all employees.
 - **26** Employees attended a Wellbeing event with the intention of providing support and guidance in relation to mental health to other employees within the Service.
 - On recognising the need to support colleagues within the workplace we will be engaging 'Mental Health First Aiders' who will be able to provide initial mental health support in a similar concept to trained First Aiders for physical ailments.
-



8.0 Finance Performance Update

This update covers the financial position for the Authority for the year ending 31 March 2023. The revenue budget for the year 2022/23 was approved by the Staffordshire Commissioner at £42.5m in February 2022 which included a Band D council tax of £80.35, an increase of 1.99% for the year (3p per week).

The total revenue spend for the year closed in line with budget despite a very challenging year due to unprecedented cost increases and the impact of pay inflation. This year end position included additional pay pressures for operational staff of 7% following final agreement with the Fire Brigade Union membership with the agreed fire staff award concluding with an average of over 5%. These increases were against a pay budget assumption set at 3%. It should be noted that all pay awards for fire operational and support staff are undertaken by national negotiating bodies.

Whole-time overtime costs included the benefit of the approved minimum crewing of four for whole-time appliance mobilisation which has helped to mitigate the impact of the additional pay award. Crewing costs as part of this change has resulted in savings in overtime and crewing deficiency costs of £0.6m when compared to last year. Lower headcount and operational activity in year have resulted in savings for on-call compared to budget and a number of vacancies have been carried for fire support staff during the year.

Non-pay costs closed adverse to budget and this include higher costs being incurred on a number of key areas due to the inflationary pressure experience e.g. for higher fuel and supplies and services costs. The unitary charge (UC) cost reflected the increase in the variable cost element of the UC following the annual increase in RPIx. In terms of mitigating factors, the increase in interest rates resulted in an additional £0.4m of interest receivable in year and business rates S31 grant income was better than anticipated.

The Capital Programme spend for the year was £3.2m and whilst this was lower than budget good progress has been made particularly with the procurement of two new Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALP) and two Heavy Rescue tenders which should all be available for delivery during 2023/24. New operational fire kit has also been delivered in year as part of a £1.5m investment and the £0.5m refurbishment at Abbots Bromley fire station has also been successfully completed in year. This investment has been supported by £1.5m of earmarked reserves.

The Cash position closed at £16.9m and is cumulatively £8.4m better than budget, with the Firefighters' Pension Top-up grant £0.9m higher, Grants +£2.1m and a lower capital programme than budget. Cash remains in a very healthy position and new borrowing will not be required during 2023/24.

In summary, despite a very challenging year the financial position has been well managed, and overall the total revenue position has been contained within the approved budget set at the start of the year.

