Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
De Cymru

South Wales
Fire and Rescue Service

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Annual Improvement Plan

How we did in 2022-2023 and What we plan to do in 2024-2025

**RAISING AWARENESS
REDUCING RISK**

This document is also available in Welsh

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Foreword

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Chief Fire Officer
South Wales
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Chairperson
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Hello, and welcome to our latest Annual Improvement Plan.

This plan serves to celebrate and reflect upon all we have achieved as an organisation in 2022-2023, but also details our plans and Strategic Themes to help us achieve our mission of keeping South Wales safe by reducing risk in 2024-2025 and beyond.

The Service's objectives and priorities have been developed in consultation with our staff, the communities that we serve and our connected stakeholders. The feedback obtained will provide a focus to enable the Service to continue to reduce risk and support our communities in their times of need.

This has been a challenging year for us as a Service with increased interest in topics such as Welsh Government's legislative changes to the speed limit on restricted roads from 30mph to 20mph, numerous operational incidents and of course our Independent Culture Review. As Chief Fire Officer, I instigated the review of our culture, discipline processes and historic cases where our employees have failed to uphold our high standards following an investigative news piece by ITV News. Fenella Morris KC was appointed as Chair of the review in February and after a fact-finding period is now working with her team to produce a report by the end of 2023.

This year we became the first fire and rescue service in the UK to introduce the new Crimestoppers FRS Speak Up advice line and website, allowing any of our staff concerned by inappropriate behaviours or practices to raise their concerns with Crimestoppers directly, confidentially and anonymously. We also gained our Real Living Wage accreditation.

Your views and experiences are essential in shaping a new way forward for us.

At the end of this plan, we hope you will tell us what you think about our objectives, and that you will complete our consultation survey or simply just get in touch; your thoughts, views and ideas are essential to our success.

Huw Jakeway QFSM | Chief Fire Officer

Introduction

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service is one of the largest fire and rescue services in the UK, covering 10 unitary authorities and a population of over 1.5 million. Recent census data shows that we serve some of the most densely populated and fastest growing communities in Wales. Geographically we are responsible for rural, coastal, and urban settings covering over 2,800 square kilometres.

The services we must provide are outlined in a range of legal frameworks including:

- The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 ('the Measure')
- The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 ('the WFGA')
- The Welsh Government Fire and Rescue National Framework 2016

As a designated 'Welsh Improvement Authority', the Measure requires us to set and publish improvement objectives and to consult on these, demonstrating that our plans have regard to the seven aspects of improvement:

- Strategic effectiveness
- Service quality
- Service availability
- Fairness
- Sustainability
- Efficiency
- Innovation

We are also required by the WFGA to set and publish well-being objectives designed to maximise our contribution towards improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of future generations of people in Wales. Under the 'sustainable development principle', which comprises of seven goals, we must take all reasonable steps to meet these objectives. Each year we publish a statement and an annual report on our progress, including our response to any recommendations from the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

We have a duty to keep the people, communities, businesses, and environment of South Wales safe from fires and other hazards. To do this effectively and efficiently, for now and for future generations, we continually consider the needs and views of our communities, by working across departments, with partners and with our communities. This Improvement Plan looks back to 2022-2023 and reviews delivery against our plans and key performance indicators. It also looks forward to 2024-2025, outlining our proposed objectives and activities which are open to public consultation.

Well-being Statement

The sustainable development principle of the WFGA states that:

Public Services bodies should act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

We are committed to meeting our duties under the WFGA.

As we develop our Strategic Themes, which are the high-level priorities shaping our plan, the seven WFGA goals are considered to ensure we contribute to their achievement.
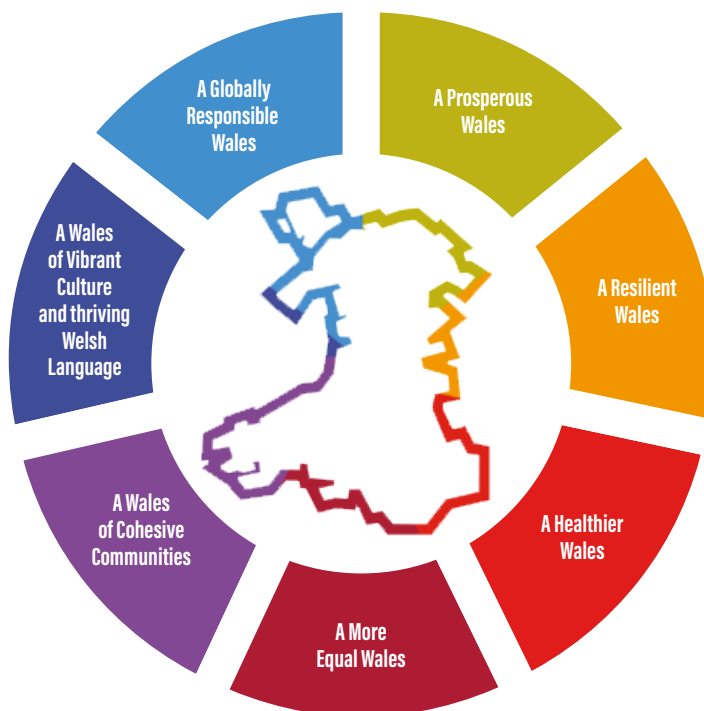
The WFGA also identifies the following five ways of working which we must consider and act in accordance with when planning and making decisions:

- Balancing short term needs with **long-term** needs – Taking a longer-term view in our Strategic Plan 2020-2030 allows us to consider how future trends and changes will impact the public and our services, including climate and demographic change

- Putting resources into **preventing** problems – Our preventative activity ranges from working with businesses and building owners to make premises safe to working with individuals and groups to change behaviour, all with the aim of preventing need for an emergency response

- Using an **integrated** approach, balancing social, economic, and environmental needs – Our planning process is undertaken collectively by involving various stakeholders including our staff, our partners and members of the public, to ensure the impact of proposals are fully explored

- **Collaborating** with others to help meet well-being objectives – We work with a wide range of partners at a strategic and local level

- **Involving** others to reflect the diversity of an area – Our consultation and engagement activities ensure there are opportunities to contribute views and ideas.

Long-term   **Preventing**   **Integration**   **Collaboration**   **Involvement**

Success of the WFGA in Wales has been recognised by the United Nations with a declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations and a call to place future generations at the centre of decision making.

The Socio-Economic Duty 2021

Since March 2021, public bodies in Wales have had to consider how strategic decisions affect those who live in less favourable social and economic circumstances, for example, experiencing poverty or unequal access to services such as transport. Such disadvantage can result in inequalities of outcome including poorer health, lower educational attainment, and less favourable work opportunities. We therefore give due regard to socio-economic disadvantage in making strategic decisions, which contributes to the WFGA goals.

We complete Equality Impact Assessments when developing projects, amending or writing policies, designing initiatives/campaigns, etc, and these assessments are kept under review to ensure our activities are truly inclusive. By addressing any barriers to accessing our services, our focus is on the people we serve.

Community Risk Management Plans (CRMPs)

Each of our 47 fire and rescue stations produces an annual CRMP including an assessment of demographics, to better understand the communities they serve, and local risks/priorities including building/premises risks, water, and roads. These plans also highlight community activities and initiatives that are planned and delivered locally and support the work of Public Service Boards (PSBs).

In this Improvement Plan, we provide an overview of the area we serve, highlighting some of the specific challenges faced and how they impact our communities. This demonstrates the thread joining our stations' plans to our strategic priorities, linked by our work with unitary authorities and coordinating bodies, including local PSBs.

Our Public Service Boards

The PSBs report annually on their progress to show how responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFGA) are being met. They prepare and publish local well-being plans that highlight change needed to be made within each geographical region and what steps are being put in place to achieve this.

To ensure that we are effective members of the PSBs, we always consider the long-term implications of our actions. We look to collaborate and take an integrated approach to deliver a service that will help people feel safe and well in their daily lives.

Our work with the PSBs demonstrates our commitment to improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales, along with the sustainable development principle of the WFGA, the seven goals of the WFGA and applying the five ways of working.

Following recent changes to the structure of some of our PSBs, we continue to work with and support the PSBs in our area and to engage at a strategic and local level with the new PSB structures.

Please click on the relevant logo below to visit a PSB website.

Local Assessment

We have reviewed the local well-being assessments from our PSBs looking at how we can support our PSB partners in improving economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being.

We have also referenced the World Health Organisations 'Climate Change in Wales' health impact assessment (published July 2023) that explores the wider impact of climate change in Wales and Welsh Government's Well-being of Wales: 2023 assessment of progress against the seven national well-being goals (published September 2023).

Social

Mental well-being is an important factor to overall health. Although there has been improvement since 2016-2017, Public Health Wales reports that Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf are below the Wales average for mental well-being and have the highest levels of deprivation in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) PSB area. It has been found that those from more deprived areas in Wales were more likely to report poorer scores against the four mental well-being indicators included in the Annual Population Survey conducted by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). Cardiff ranks third mongst Welsh unitary authorities for adult mental well-being and has improved since 2016-2017 by a greater margin than the the Welsh average.

Being outdoors is good for positive mental health. CTM highlights that the area has an extensive range of open green space from the valleys to the coast that offers the opportunity to escape and experience tranquillity. Making good use of these areas and promoting their benefits for mental health is an opportunity to provide preventative and early support to improve mental health. As a service, we are working towards having well-being areas at all locations and increasing our green areas on stations for use by our staff and local communities. We take part in 'Time to Talk day' and place importance on the positive mental health of our staff by increasing the number of mental health first aiders within the service.

Those with poor mental health are twice as likely to smoke. We continue to offer advice on smoking cessation and additional fire safety in the home for smokers. There has been an increase in use of e-cigarettes in the last year, however, which present fire risk due to lithium batteries.

Each of the four PSB Assessments offer some similarity in terms of population growth and fertility decline, although Newport currently has the highest population growth at 9.5% (higher than the rate for Wales at 1.4% and England at 6.6%) and Cardiff is the most densely populated. There is a growth in the 65+ age range for all PSBs, Cardiff and Gwent both forecast growth above the Welsh average. Although there are benefits to an ageing population, such as increased volunteering and social activism, there also must be a consideration of increased demand on social care and health services, and safety risk particularly where mobility or dementia issues are present for those living alone.

CTM, Cardiff, and the Vale of Glamorgan all identify dementia as increasing dramatically within the next 20 years. RCT identifies initiatives in the communities and in work providing support and knowledge around dementia that will assist those who are living with the disease as well as helping family, friends and carers. As a service, we are rolling out specific dementia awareness training to our station crews and our Home Safety Practitioners have additional training for complex cases. We also support Dementia Awareness Week and have formed partnerships with local dementia groups.

Obesity is noted as the leading public health concern in Wales as the numbers increase year on year for children and adults. Poverty and the cost of food have been barriers to a healthy diet in Wales since before 2020 and it is thought that climate change will also impact on this as extreme weather disrupts food production and poorer soil quality impacts on crop yields. We will ensure that we continue to develop training and equipment resources to provide an effective response for bariatric casualties, including working in partnership with NHS colleagues, as we have seen increased call for our support.

Economic

The latest Welsh Government Well-being of Wales Report identifies weak real income and productivity growth in the UK overall but indicates that Wales is keeping pace with the rest of the UK, although immediate prospects are likely to be affected by high inflation and continuing economic slowdown. While the employment rate for people aged 16-64 is similar to but below the UK rate, it has been volatile in recent years.   Economic inactivity in Wales is higher than the UK and has increased in the last year.

The largest influence on employment and income comes from skills and qualifications. Eight of our unitary authorities are in the ten lowest qualification rates for Wales. For the income domain, the unitary authorities with the highest proportion of areas in the most deprived 10% were Newport, Merthyr Tydfil and Cardiff, all at around 20%. Monmouthshire had no areas in the most deprived 10% (Welsh Government, 2019)

Individuals and families in good quality and affordable homes live healthier lives. Housing, health and socio-economic well-being are all impacted by the quality of housing that people can access, and this will have an ongoing impact from an environmental perspective.

Environmental

The changing climate and the devastating effect of flooding has been apparent, especially in the CTM area. People were worried about the impact on their standard of living because of climate change and future flood events. Floods had already impacted homes, businesses, and the environment, but those from lower income areas are suffering due to being unable to afford to move, increasing insurance costs and damage repairs.

Urban areas are more exposed to the impacts of flooding, but the use of nature-based solutions and green space can potentially help with this. Public Health Wales suggest that rural communities will be exposed to a large proportion of flooding and wildfires due to accounting for 82% of the land area of Wales. The highest rates of wildfire occur in the Welsh valleys but many rural areas in Gwent rarely experience them. We continue to work in partnership with communities, educating on the dangers and damage that wildfires cause, and liaising with land managers to reduce risk.

Welsh Government has an ambition for a carbon neutral public sector by 2030. Air quality is being affected by climate change and this is increasing rapidly with air pollution a recognised cause of avoidable ill health and deaths. Petrol and diesel-fuelled transport are a major contributor to air pollution in our towns and cities. Many current transport modes are having a negative impact on the environment and health, leading to exploration of alternative options, such as active travel and electric and hydrogen vehicles. We continue to review our own plans to reduce our carbon footprint, including our use of electric vehicles and have signed up to the Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, and Gwent public sector on Healthy Travel Charters to demonstrate our commitment to more sustainable travel.

Cultural

The industrial and historical legacy of Wales is evident in our land, historical buildings, castles, ruins, and burial grounds. Cadw describes the coal mines across South Wales and the Rhondda Valley as 'a leading player in Britain's Industrial Revolution,' also recognising that the landscapes of Wales have been shaped by human activity. They wish to preserve the historic and cultural aspects of these. We recognise our role in protecting local heritage, developing Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) reports and response plans.

Welsh Government's target to increase the number of Welsh speakers to one million by 2050 is supported by the Service's commitment to the Welsh language. In Gwent it is considered that an increasing number of Welsh speakers will be a positive contribution towards well-being and sense of belonging. Cardiff's PSB sees the Welsh language as 'an intrinsic part of who we are as a nation, our culture and our way of life' They have a plan to make Cardiff a truly bilingual capital of Wales alongside doubling the number of Welsh speakers.

About us and our communities

"To make South Wales safer, by reducing risk"

Our mission statement describes the overall purpose of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service: what we do, who we do it for, and how and why we do it. As well as a statutory duty to provide certain services, from responding to fires or carrying out inland water rescues to prevention and risk reduction, we must work in partnership for the benefit of our communities, now and in the future. This is aided by understanding our communities and the challenges we face.

Protection
- Road Safety
- Home Fire Safety Checks
- Business Fire Safety
- Arson Reduction Patrols

Prevention
- Education
- Home Safety Awareness
- Community Engagement
- Arson Prevention

Response
- Road Traffic Collisions
- Domestic/Commercial Fires
- Environment Protection
- Urban Search and Rescue
- Transport Incidents
- Animal Rescue

Since April 1996, South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has been responsible for providing the Fire and Rescue Service for the geographical area of South Wales in accordance with legal frameworks. The Fire and Rescue Authority consists of 24 members representing the 10 Unitary Authorities we serve. The number of Councillor Representatives for each Unitary Authority depends on the size of electoral representatives and political proportionality.

The Authority and its committees meet regularly with papers and videos of meetings published online – details are available on our website.

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service operates from 47 Fire and Rescue Stations which comprise:

- **20** Wholetime Stations, nine of which also have On-Call complement
- **27** On-Call Stations

We share 11 stations with colleagues from other emergency services. Joint Fire Control, operated with Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, is in the Joint Public Service Centre at South Wales Police HQ. Colocation helps us to work together effectively which is further supported by liaison across the Service established with Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust (WAST), the NHS, Gwent Police and South Wales Police.

Cardiff Gate Training and Development Centre provides a dedicated resource to deliver operational training to the highest standard. Our Occupational Health Unit, based in Pontyclun, supports our staff in their health and well-being.

From our Headquarters in Llantrisant, all our teams, from Fleet & Engineering and Finance to Risk Reduction and People Services, support our crews and deliver additional services to our communities.

We employ **1,696** staff (at 31st March 2023), some of whom hold more than one contract. They are made up of:

- **823** Wholetime Operational Staff
- **532** On-Call Operational Staff
- **38** Fire Control Staff
- **303** Non-Operational Staff, comprising Corporate and Fire Safety personnel

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service has a statutory duty and a legal requirement under the Civil Contingency Act 2004 to provide an emergency Fire and Rescue provision to the communities of South Wales. Our current Business Continuity Management plans have led to the creation of the Auxiliary Reserve who will provide this resilience. We employ 82 Auxiliary Firefighters and since April we have supplemented this reserve by recruiting 24 Auxiliary Fire Control staff.

Like many organisations in recent years, we have experienced challenges in recruiting to certain roles. Staff turnover has increased and, following the challenges of remote working during the pandemic, we then had to recapture our workplace community on return to the office. Our focus is always on finding the right people and supporting their development, so we continue to explore new ways of working, from upgrading systems to introducing more online training and development opportunities such as our Pathways Programmes.

Recruitment and retention of On-Call Firefighters is an ongoing focus. Our On-Call crews are vital and make a difference to their communities. While the role is based around other commitments, we recognise that individual circumstances change so seek to innovate from recruitment to training and contract arrangements. All fire and rescue services with an element of On-Call crewing face similar concerns, so we continue to share experiences and solutions.

Our aim is to reflect the communities we serve, therefore we continually promote the Service's employment opportunities.

Staff Demographics 31st March 2023

Male	Female	Disabled	Aged 26-60
82.3%	**17.7%**	**5%**	**80%**

Our communities

We serve 10 unitary authorities, covering an area of approx. 2,800km^2 (1,081 sq miles) including 3.7km^2 (1.4 sq miles) of inland water. The area is a mix of urban communities, including the cities of Cardiff and Newport, as well as large valleys, towns and sizable rural areas.

With a resident population of over 1.5 million people, we protect half the population of Wales. Our communities are amongst the most diverse in Wales – latest Census figures report that in 2021 8.6% of our population identified as ethnicity other than White compared with 6.2% for the whole of Wales. This varies across the area with the most diverse populations residing in Cardiff and Newport. While there was an overall increase of 2.9% in our population from 2011 to 2021, two unitary authorities recorded a reduction (Blaenau Gwent by -4.2% and Caerphilly by -1.6%). The largest population increase was in Newport (+9.5%) followed by Cardiff (+4.7%), Bridgend (+4.5%) and Vale of Glamorgan (+4.4%).

All areas have seen an increase in the 65+ age group, with Monmouthshire (+26.3%) and Vale of Glamorgan (+25.7%) recording the largest change, as well as largest proportions of total population at 25.9% and 22% respectively. This contrasts with 14.5% of Cardiff and 17% of Newport populations aged over 65. These changes are of significance as we recognise increased risk of injury in dwelling fires amongst older residents. This change is driving our focus on developing strategic partnerships to aid targeting of prevention activities. In the longer term, population projections for Wales anticipate slowing population growth overall but an increasingly aging population.

Socio-economic disadvantage increases risk, often impacting access to services for those with least resilience to changing circumstances. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) measures relative deprivation, ranking the 1,909 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs – geographic areas of about 1,500 people) in Wales from most to least deprived. This comparison highlights community differences as almost a quarter of LSOAs in Newport and Merthyr Tydfil are ranked in the 10% most deprived while Monmouthshire has none. In Blaenau Gwent, 85% of LSOAs are ranked in the 50% most deprived.

We work closely with unitary authorities and developers to ensure safety of buildings from the earliest planning stages. This continues as we produce Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) reports for key premises which inform our response plans and we also assess properties vulnerable to arson. Our risk reduction activity also recognises vulnerability and risk in specific groups, for example, working with traveller communities and housing providers for refugees and asylum seekers.

Transport and travel

South East Wales contains over 9,100km (5,650 miles) of roads, including the A470, A465, A40, A449 and M4, and over a million passengers a year move through Cardiff Airport. Welsh Government's plans for the Cardiff Metro transport system, developing an integrated network across South East Wales, could transform travel within the region by enabling greener travel options, greater connectivity and reducing road congestion. A further objective is to encourage active travel and social inclusion initiatives. Travel restrictions during the pandemic reduced traffic volumes and saw a reduction in road traffic collisions. Development of an alternative infrastructure could reduce future traffic by providing improved public transport routes.

Industry and employment

The 2021 census reported the local authorities in England and Wales with highest rates of economically inactive or long-term sick or disabled residents aged 16-64, with four of the top 10 in the Service's area (Blaenau Gwent 36.1%, Merthyr Tydfil 34%, Caerphilly 32.2% and Rhondda Cynon Taf 30.6%). While

manufacturing industry has declined, regeneration and investment has seen opportunities delivered by new technology. South East Wales is responsible for around 50% of total economic output of the Welsh economy and is home to 50,000 local businesses. The Cardiff Capital Region works across the region to support investment and development of skills and infrastructure.

Tourism and recreation

The Wye Valley has been designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Blaenavon industrial landscape is recognised for the evidence it retains of the British Industrial Revolution. The Glamorgan coast from Aberthaw to Porthcawl is a designated Heritage Coast while the Severn Estuary was designated as a Special Area of Conservation in 2009.

Our region has a rich heritage that has resulted in the environment, both natural and manmade, we now enjoy. There are 690 protected Scheduled Monuments of archaeological importance, including Roman remains, burial mounds, earthworks and industrial sites. Awareness of these locations will help us to work with others, particularly Cadw and local authorities, as we plan for and respond to environmental events such as flooding and wildfires. We recognise that many of the 6,000+ listed buildings within the Service's area are structures such as railings, walls and telephone boxes, we continue to identify and put response plans in place for key buildings.

Education

There are three universities: Cardiff University, University of South Wales and Cardiff Metropolitan University, as well as five further education colleges with multiple sites. For our student population, many of whom are living away from home for the first time, we provide advice on staying safe in rented accommodation and student halls.

For the 597 maintained schools across 614 sites, we have a programme of school visits to raise awareness of environmental and behavioural risks associated with fire, water and road safety. These sessions are delivered by local crews and dedicated risk reduction specialists. School Arson Vulnerability Assessments are also carried out due to the risk associated with school sites. This activity helps to forge local partnerships and cooperation.

Emerging issues

The impact of **climate change** has become apparent in recent years with increases in wildfires during periods of prolonged hot, dry weather. We usually see an increase in wildfires during early Spring but are now seeing a second spike during the Summer resulting in an increase in fires attended and placing extra demand on our crews. Our expertise is recognised worldwide, with personnel deployed to support European colleagues and engaging with international experts at conferences and events. We are supporting development of all-Wales wildfire training, collaborating with fire and rescue services and partners including Natural Resources Wales.

Extreme weather events have the potential for more water-related incidents, with climate change projections predicting an increase in heavy summer rainfall events leading to surface water flooding, in addition to more frequent winter storms. For our communities, climate change will have an unequal impact on health and well-being as those who are on lower incomes as well as the vulnerable, children and the older population are likely to face greater hardship and community resilience will be affected.

The increased use of **lithium-ion batteries** in products ranging from toys and handheld power tools to e-scooters and electric vehicles has been identified as an emerging risk. This is a safe energy source when handled with care, but should batteries be damaged or overheat during use or when charging, they present a fire risk. We are liaising with other fire and rescue services to better understand this risk and how to respond, coordinated by a working group with representatives from across the Service. We have also issued guidance on safe use, storage and disposal.

Slowing population growth and an aging population will see **increased demand for public services** and we expect demand for risk reduction interventions to rise based on our evaluation of community risk. Households are expected to become smaller with an increase in single person households, identified as a risk for the elderly and those with health-related conditions that limit mobility.

With the working age population growing more slowly, we may face increased challenges for our **workforce planning**. Recent changes in the employment market such as low unemployment rates and high vacancy levels may emerge as longer-term patterns and the challenge for us, like other employers, will be to be recognised as an employer of choice.

Inherent to monitoring and evaluation of the needs of our communities and our own performance is **better use of data**. This has been identified in recent audits. We recognise the importance of partnership working and this includes robust data sharing mechanisms which we are developing to add value to our own data and contribute to the work of others.

Legislative changes continue to be introduced in Wales and we act upon these to ensure that there is wider awareness of their implications and requirements for compliance amongst stakeholders and responsible persons.

2022-2023 Statistics Overview

34,682 calls received by Joint Fire Control for South Wales Fire and Rescue Service area, including:

1,052 calls referred to other agencies.

2,500 calls that did not require emergency response and were dealt with by Joint Fire Control.

10,413 repeat calls relating to incidents already in progress.

18,705 incidents attended.

6,031 fires including:

623 accidental dwelling fires

1,228 grass/wildfires

2,706 refuse fires

71.0% of fires attended were deliberate

8,746 false alarms in response to:

5,419 automatic fire alarms

3,023 calls made with good intent

304 malicious calls

3,928 Special Service calls including:

848 road traffic collisions

47 water rescues

3,033 other emergency incidents*

Risk reduction activity included:

987 school visits

12,309 home safety checks

655 fire safety audits

* Other non-fire incidents requiring attendance of an appliance or officer.

How we performed in 2022-2023

It is essential that we review our performance to monitor our efficiency and effectiveness. We set annual targets against Welsh Government's Strategic Performance Indicators and compare our performance against other fire and rescue services, regularly sharing data to inform this monitoring and providing benchmarking data for comparison.

This section gives information on how we have performed against our strategic targets and other key performance measures.

Calls Received

In 2022-2023, South Wales Fire and Rescue received 34,682 calls, a 6.9% increase on the previous year when 32,456 calls were taken. Of all calls, 10,413 (30% of the total) were repeat calls for incidents already notified, and a further 1,052 were referred to other agencies.

Our Call Challenge policy helps us to manage calls which could result in unnecessary mobilisation to False Alarm incidents. By asking key questions and ascertaining the caller's location, Joint Fire Control can identify hoax calls or malicious calls and to verify calls made with good intent, assessing risk and, in the last year, avoiding 4,486 unnecessary mobilisations.

All Incidents attended
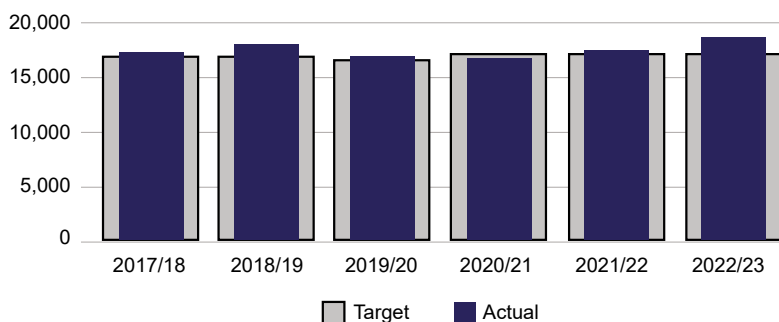
2022-2023 Target	17,052
Actual Performance	18,705
Variance	+9.69%
Rate per 10,000 Population	
SWFRS	114.2
Wales	109.6
England	102.1

We attended 1,203 more incidents in 2022-2023 than the previous year, an increase of 7%. This increase was spread across Fires (+466, 8.1% increase), False Alarms (+379, 4.8%) and Other Special Service Calls (+369, 15.6%) with only Road Traffic Collisions recording a marginal reduction (-11, -1.1%). The following pages provide a review of each of our strategic indicators.
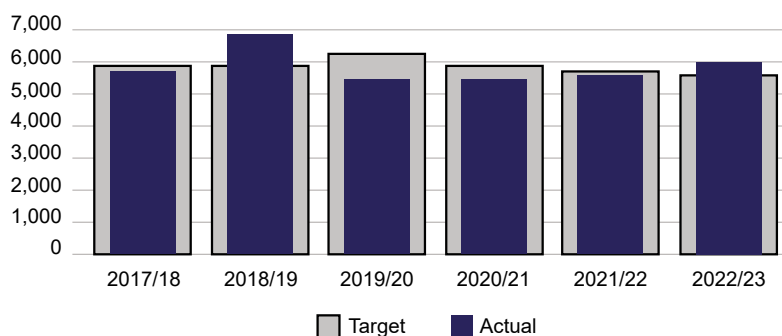
To review risk and coordinate activity including training, operational response and risk reduction, working groups develop specialist expertise which is disseminated across the Service and with partners where appropriate.

For information from other services:

- Home Office – Fire and rescue incident statistics (England)
- Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service
- North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
- Stats Wales

Fires attended

Chart bars (Target / Actual)	
2017/18	
2018/19	
2019/20	
2020/21	
2021/22	
2022/23	

Legend: ☐ Target ■ Actual

2022-2023 Target	5,601
Actual Performance	6,031
Variance	+7.70%
Rate per 10,000 Population	
SWFRS	39.6
Wales	35.6
England	31.6

Fires attended increased by 8% to 5,601 in 2022-2023 compared to the previous year. This was below the average of 5,875 fires attended annually over the last five years. In the longer term, it represents a 4% increase compared to five years ago 2017-2018 and a 3% increase compared to ten years ago 2012-2013. Each year, around 70% of all fires attended are set deliberately.

The rate of incidents is slightly higher in South Wales FRS compared to Wales and England – this has been consistent over the reporting and comparison period(s). Contributing to this is the high proportion of wildfires we respond to, 22% of all fires attended compared to 17% in England.

Refuse fires are consistently the most common type of fire attended, representing around 43% of all fires. We saw a reduction in 2019-2020 (pre-Covid) but numbers have since risen, with a 9% increase in 2022-2023 compared to the previous year. Although there is a seasonal pattern, with numbers increasing in the Spring and Autumn (around bonfire night), we see an underlying monthly core volume. We have found a correlation between refuse fires and wildfires as refuse fires increase during periods of increased wildfires, causing additional monthly fluctuations. Annually, around 90% of refuse fires are set deliberately. We have established a Refuse Fires Working Group to coordinate campaigns and work with partners so that we can better understand and respond to the risk and community nuisance these incidents cause.

Attendance at **wildfires** increases in the Spring, particularly during March/April. In 2022-2023 we attended more incidents during July and August, coinciding with an extended period of hotter, drier weather. This resulted in a 13% increase compared to the previous year. With the impact of climate change, we expect that this pattern of a second, later peak will become more frequent. Our valley communities are particularly affected by these incidents, hence our ongoing work with partners in those areas. Each year, around 90% of wildfires are set deliberately.

Although **dwelling fires** have been steadily reducing over the past 10 years, in 2022-2023 there was a 5% increase on the previous year. Each year, around 10% of dwelling fires are set deliberately.

Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs) are a focus for our prevention activities. In 2022-2023 we attended nine more than the previous year, an increase of 1.5% (from 614 to 623). Risk factors identified include financially stretched households, people living alone, particularly those who are elderly or with mobility issues, and social rented properties are overrepresented in our statistics. This aligns with national analysis and informs our prioritisation of home fire safety checks and our work with social housing providers. Cooking related fires are consistently the most frequent cause of ADFs (around 60% each year). Whilst smoking related fires account for less than 10% of ADFs, they have been, on average, responsible for 47% of ADF fatalities every year.

Road Vehicle fires have been falling since 2016-2017, with a 3% decrease in 2022-2023 compared to the previous year. We continue to monitor these incidents as they can be indicative of criminal or social issues within communities.

False Alarms attended
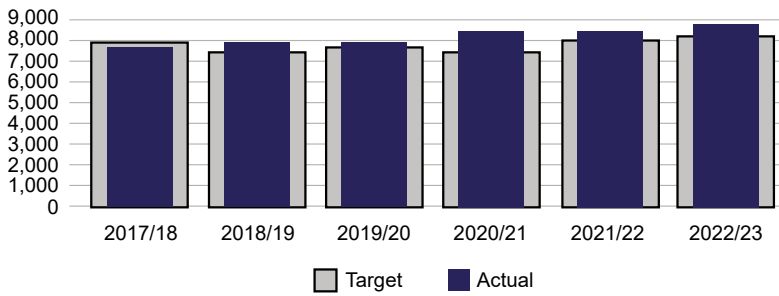
2022-2023 Target	8,114
Actual Performance	8,746
Variance	+7.80%
Rate per 10,000 Population	
SWFRS	57.4
Wales	53.4
England	44.8

A false alarm is recorded when a location is attended for a fire or non-fire incident but on arrival no incident exists. False alarms can be due to apparatus, good intent or malicious and related to Fire or Special Service incident types.

The Service attended an average of 8,228 false alarm incidents over the last five years. In 2022-2023, 8,746 incidents were attended, an increase of 5% on the previous year. This represented 47% of all incidents for the Service. In the longer term, we attended 14% more false alarms compared to five and ten years ago.

Fire False Alarm Incidents have increased year-on-year over the last five years caused by an upward trend in False Alarms due to apparatus (Automatic Fire Alarms or AFAs). They accounted for 65% of all fire false alarm incidents in 2022-2023 at 5,419 incidents. Good intent false alarms, made in good faith that there is a fire, have reduced over the last three years, to 32% of fire false alarms last year. We usually record more good intent false alarms during wildfire peaks. Malicious false alarms have consistently represented 3% of all false alarm calls attended.

The largest rise in AFAs has been in domestic premises, increasing by 37% over five years (from 1,266 in 2017-2018 to 1,733 in 2022-2023). During the same period, AFAs in Other Residential premises (which includes residential homes) increased by 1.7% (from 710 to 722) but the increase since 2021-2022 has been 54% from 467. Non-residential settings, hospitals and medical care settings followed by educational premises are the main premises attended for AFAs.

AFA activations are most often caused by system faults or cooking. Good intent false alarms are most often calls to dwellings or reports of grass or refuse fires.

Resources – In 2017-2018, we introduced a policy to limit the number of appliances deployed to certain property types during daytime hours where an AFA had activated. In that year, the average number of appliances on scene for AFAs was 1.38 pumps per incident and this increased to 1.50 pumps per incident in 2022-2023.

Benchmarking – False Alarm incidents attended per 10,000 population is higher than all of Wales, and for England. The overall increase recorded was the same as Wales (+5%) but below the increase in England (+6%). Some services have introduced policies reducing or stopping attendance for certain AFA calls, usually relating to commercial premises during working hours.

Other False Alarm incidents increased 30% in the last year, from 247 in 2021-2022 to 320 with increased calls to dwellings. Note that this mirrors an increase in Special Service Calls.

Road Traffic Collisions attended

Legend	
Target	Actual
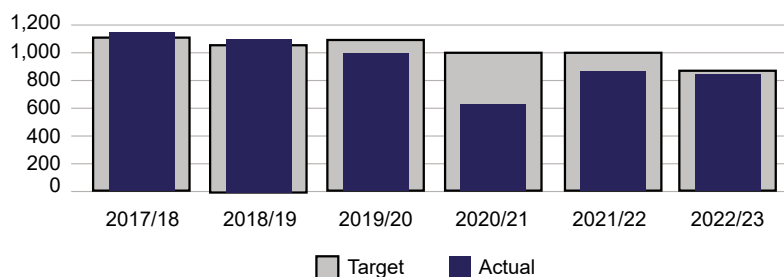
2022-2023 Target	870
Actual Performance	848
Variance	-2.59%
Rate per 10,000 Population	
SWFRS	5.6
Wales	6.0
England	5.5

There was a fall in the total number of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) attended by the Service in 2022-2023 to 848 from 859 in the previous year, 2.59% below our performance target of 870. Although total incidents attended in the last two years have increased from the low level recorded in 2020-2021 during pandemic-related restrictions on travel, the longer-term downward trend continues.

The proportion of incidents which involved interaction with a victim has increased from 34.4% (392 out of 1,138) in 2017-2018 to 48.6% (412 out of 848) in 2022-2023. The proportion of incidents requiring extrication or release of persons was similar at 18%.

We do not attend all RTCs and also use the national STATS19 dataset, collected by police forces whenever an injury collision is reported to them.   This provides in-depth analysis of vehicles, victims and circumstances, and enables us to better understand road risk for planning.   In the five calendar years from 2017 to 2021, casualty numbers peaked in the 20-29 age group and there was a higher proportion of males than females. Overall, there were higher casualty numbers living in the most deprived areas although this varied by unitary authority. 14% of casualties lived outside Wales, while 14.2% of all casualties were pedestrian and the proportions of motorcyclists and cyclists was similar at 9.0% and 8.8% respectively.

For the Service, we see the highest number of incidents annually recorded in Rhondda Cynon Taf (18.9% average over five years) followed by Cardiff (18.4%)

Benchmarking – The number of RTCs we attend per 10,000 population is below the rate for all of Wales, but marginally higher England. The decrease in RTCs attended by SWFRS in 2022-2023 (down 1.3%) did not follow the all Wales or all England trend of an increase.

Change in Speed Limits - For the coming year with Welsh Government's introduction of 20mph speed limits on residential roads and busy pedestrian streets across Wales, we will continue our collaborative work with partners to deliver key Road Safety messages and education. It is expected that this will reduce casualty numbers overall where rates on 30mph roads have been highest. However, the immediate impact on incidents attended by us may be limited as we attend a higher proportion of the most serious accidents on non-residential roads.

Other Special Service Calls (SSCs) attended
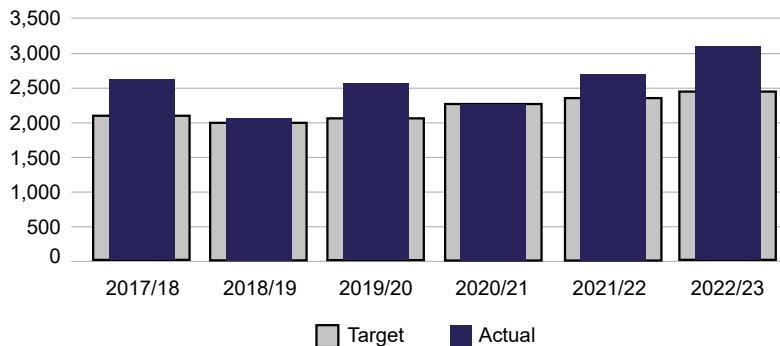
2022-2023 Target	2,467
Actual Performance	3,080
Variance	+24.8%
Rate per 10,000 Population	
SWFRS	20.2
Wales	25.5
England	28.1

Special Service Calls (SSCs) are non-fire incidents that include but are not limited to: local emergencies such as road traffic collisions (reported separately), medical incidents and rescue of persons; major environmental disasters like flooding or hazardous material incidents; domestic incidents such as persons locked in/out and suicide/attempts; and prior arrangements to attend or assist other agencies.

We recorded a 14% increase in Other SSCs (excluding RTCs) in 2022-2023 compared with the previous year, from 2,711 to 3,080. The largest increases were seen in assistance to other agencies (up by 38% to 666), flooding incidents (up by 49% to 255) and effecting entry/exit (up by 20.5% to 412). In the longer term, there has been a 17% overall increase in Other SSC incidents compared to five years ago and a 47% increase compared to ten years ago.

Flooding incidents have risen by 49% (to 255) in 2022-2023 but remain lower than during the two prior years when we saw intense storm periods. Environmental flooding hotspots have included the area from Trecynon to Aberaman, Pentre and Treorchy, Pontypridd, and Cwmbran. Most house floods continue to occur in Cardiff and Newport.

Water rescues have risen by 52% (to 47) in 2022-2023, but this was lower than the average of 54 over the previous five years. Almost a quarter of incidents took place in and around Cardiff last year, with three in Cardiff Bay and a further six along the River Taff.

Attendance to **assist other agencies** has increased from 9% of this incident category five years ago to almost 22% in 2022-2023, with total incidents increasing from 176 to 666.   Most incidents underlying this increase are to support police/ambulance (now four out of five incidents), with provision of assistance to WAST for bariatric patients consistently representing just over 40% of these. **Medical incidents** attended rose by 32% (from 114 to 151) in 2022-2023. This is a fall from 2017-2018 when 396 incidents were attended but is higher than the intervening years which ranged from 68 to 114. With an ageing population and increased longstanding illness and chronic health conditions, we expect these trends to continue.

Although we saw an increase in **effecting entry/exit incidents**, this was a reduction compared to five years ago when we attended 789 incidents (reduction of 29%). However, the increase in the last year followed a sharp fall in 2020-2021 at the start of the pandemic (278 incidents) and we have seen year-on-year increases since.

Benchmarking - The number of Other Special Services Calls we attend per head of population is lower than the number for all of Wales, and lower than the number for all of England. The increase in Other Special Services Calls in 2022-2023 (up 14%) was below the increase in Wales (up 23%), but greater than the increase in England (up 2%)
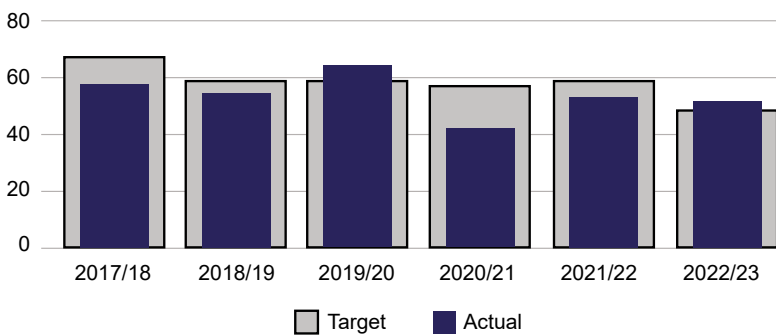
Deaths and Injuries - All Fires
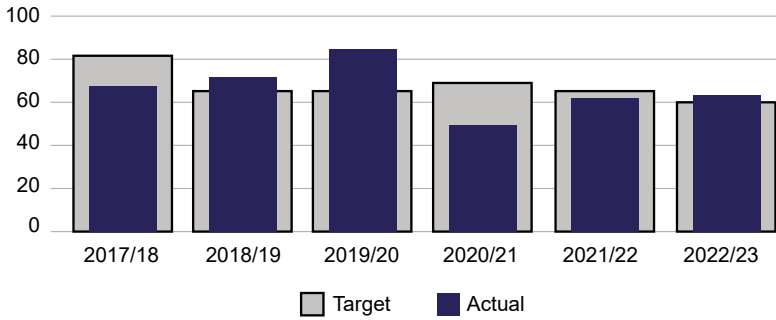
2022-2023 Target	59
Actual Performance	63
Variance	+6.8%
Rate per 100,000 Population	
SWFRS	0.4
Wales	0.4
England	0.5

Deaths and Injuries - Accidental Fires

2022-2023 Target	48
Actual Performance	52
Variance	+8.3%
Rate per 100,000 Population	
SWFRS	0.3
Wales	0.4
England	n/a

Total fire related deaths and injuries was 63, four above our target of 59 in 2022-2023. However, the longer-term trend is reducing with the annual average in the previous ten years of 71.3 and an average of 66.6 in the last five years. Recorded rates per 100,000 population are comparable with Wales and England.

We exceeded our target of 48 relating to accidental fires in 2022-2023, recording 52 victims although there was a reduction from 53 in the previous year. This trend is also reducing with the average for the previous ten years being 59.3 and 54.4 for the previous five years.

There were fewer fatalities in 2022-2023, reducing from eight to six for all fires, from six to four for accidental dwelling fires and seven to five for all accidental fires.

Between 2016 and 2023, the average age for deaths in accidental dwelling fires (ADFs) was 68 years with 63% of victims living alone and over pensionable age.   Non-fatal injuries in ADFs saw an average age of 46 and cooking was the most common cause of fire.

15% of deaths and injuries in accidental fires last year occurred where the ignition source was smoking related which rose to 50% for deaths in ADFs. 23% of deaths and injuries were caused by cooking last year, which is above the five-year average of 16%.

48% of all fire related fatalities and injuries and 46% for accidental fires occurred in the 20% most deprived areas.

Dwelling Fires contained to Room of Origin (ROO)
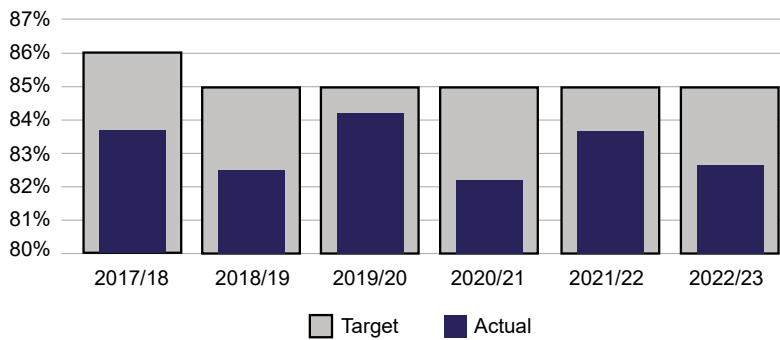
2022-2023 Target		85%
Actual Performance		82.65%
Variance	2.35 percentage points below target	
Mid & West Wales FRS		86.56%
North Wales FRS		86.84%

For this indicator, a higher percentage is better.

This is a measure of fires in permanent dwellings where there was a fire and damage (including heat/smoke damage only) was contained to the room where it started or did not spread beyond the roof or roof space.

This measure is intended to provide an indication of our success in terms of both community safety messages being understood and implemented by members of the public and the timely and effective response to emergency calls.

There was a 1.16 percentage point fall in the percentage of dwelling fires confined to the room of origin incidents in 2022-2023 compared to the previous year, a 1 percentage point fall compared to five years ago and a 0.96 percentage point fall compared to ten years ago. Of the 709 total dwelling fires attended in 2022-2023, 586 were confined to the room of origin.

Of the 123 dwelling fires that were not confined to the room of origin 30 (25%) were started in the bedroom, 24 (20%) were started in the kitchen and 14 (11%) were started in the living room.

When we arrived on scene, 100 fires had already spread beyond the room of origin, which is 14% of incidents considered by this measure.

There was no alarm present at 65 of the 123 fires that were not confined to the room of origin.

This indicator is not reported by fire and rescue services in England, but the percentage of dwelling fires confined to the room of origin was lower than Mid & West Fire and Rescue Service and North Wales Fire and Rescue Service as detailed above.

Unitary Authorities

Blaenau Gwent

1 Wholetime and 3 On-Call Fire and Rescue Stations	
27 Tredegar (On-Call)	37 Ebbw Vale (Wholetime)
35 Abertillery (On-Call)	38 Brynmawr (On-Call)

Response	21/22	22/23	Prevention		Protection	
Fires	442	513	Home Fire Safety Checks	493	Audits carried out	41
False Alarms	389	413	% over 65	45.0%	Site Specific Risks Info.	91
RTCs	37	32	School engagement		School sites	29
Other SSCs	135	133	80 sessions	2,663 young people		

Population	2011	2021
Total	69,814	66,904
16 and under	16,271	14,388
Over 65	12,477	13,523
Single person households aged over 66		4,361

Environment	
Area km^2	109
Cadw Listed Buildings	53
Scheduled Monuments	12
High Rise Buildings	1

Bridgend

2 Wholetime with On-Call complement and 5 On-Call Fire and Rescue Stations	
01 Bridgend (Wholetime/On-Call)	06 Ogmore Vale (On-Call)
02 Porthcawl (On-Call)	07 Pontycymmer (On-Call)
03 Kenfig Hill (On-Call)	08 Maesteg (Wholetime/On-Call)
05 Pencoed (On-Call)	

Response	21/22	22/23	Prevention		Protection	
Fires	455	455	Home Fire Safety Checks	1,371	Audits carried out	75
False Alarms	764	722	% over 65	43.0%	Site Specific Risks Info.	115
RTCs	98	80	School engagement		School sites	59
Other SSCs	277	265	149 sessions	5,995 young people		

Population	2011	2021
Total	139,178	145,488
16 and under	32,072	31,988
Over 65	24,854	30,095
Single person households aged over 66		8,535

Environment	
Area km^2	246
Cadw Listed Buildings	375
Scheduled Monuments	59
High Rise Buildings	0

Population Statistics – 2011 v 2021 Census Comparison
School Engagement – Key Stage visits, Crucial Crew and Grassfire Talks
Audits – Fire Safety Audits carried out by Business Fire Safety Team
Site Specific Risks – Premises with predetermined response information held
Schools - Maintained school sites at September 2023, excludes pupil referral units, includes Special Schools

Caerphilly

2 Wholetime with On-Call complement and 3 On-Call Fire and Rescue Stations	
21 Aberbargoed (Wholetime/On-Call)	30 Abercarn (On-Call)
24 Caerphilly (Wholetime/On-Call)	31 Risca (On-Call)
28 Rhymney (On-Call)	

Response	21/22	22/23	Prevention		Protection	
Fires	881	884	Home Fire Safety Checks	1,628	Audits carried out	61
False Alarms	817	889	% over 65	53.1%	Site Specific Risks Info.	153
RTCs	88	96	School engagement		School sites	87
Other SSCs	259	287	245 sessions	8,536 young people		

Population	2011	2021
Total	178,806	175,952
16 and under	44,052	40,038
Over 65	29,565	35,411
Single person households aged over 66		10,510

Environment	
Area km^2	278
Cadw Listed Buildings	377
Scheduled Monuments	48
High Rise Buildings	1

Cardiff

4 Wholetime Fire and Rescue Stations	
49 Whitchurch	51 Cardiff Central
50 Roath	52 Ely

Response	21/22	22/23	Prevention		Protection	
Fires	995	1,117	Home Fire Safety Checks	2,276	Audits carried out	173
False Alarms	2,217	2,371	% over 65	42.0%	Site Specific Risks Info.	474
RTCs	156	155	School engagement		School sites	124
Other SSCs	707	770	274 sessions	11,106 young people		

Population	2011	2021
Total	346,090	362,310
16 and under	84,866	88,510
Over 65	45,552	52,497
Single person households aged over 66		16,526

Environment	
Area km^2	140
Cadw Listed Buildings	866
Scheduled Monuments	30
High Rise Buildings	225

Merthyr Tydfil

1 Wholetime with On-Call complement and 1 On-Call Fire and Rescue Station	
25 Treharris (On-Call)	26 Merthyr Tydfil (Wholetime/On-Call)

Response	21/22	22/23	Prevention		Protection	
Fires	331	261	Home Fire Safety Checks	579	Audits carried out	14
False Alarms	345	312	% over 65	32.3%	Site Specific Risks Info.	62
RTCs	49	42	School engagement		Schools	27
Other SSCs	103	120	40 sessions	1,221 young people		

Population	2011	2021
Total	58,802	58,839
16 and under	14,049	13,661
Over 65	9,796	11,112
Single person households aged over 66	3,464	

Environment	
Area km^2	111
Cadw Listed Buildings	325
Scheduled Monuments	46
High Rise Buildings	2

Monmouthshire

5 On-Call Fire and Rescue Stations	
40 Abergavenny	43 Chepstow
41 Monmouth	44 Caldicot
42 Usk	

Response	21/22	22/23	Prevention		Protection	
Fires	200	277	Home Fire Safety Checks	574	Audits carried out	63
False Alarms	475	511	% over 65	58.5%	Site Specific Risks Info.	96
RTCs	76	75	School engagement		School sites	35
Other SSCs	154	171	274 sessions	11,106 young people		

Population	2011	2021
Total	91,323	92,957
16 and under	20,821	18,329
Over 65	19,043	24,042
Single person households aged over 66	6,534	

Environment	
Area km^2	850
Cadw Listed Buildings	2,420
Scheduled Monuments	201
High Rise Buildings	1

Newport

	3 Wholetime Fire and Rescue Stations	
	45 Malpas	47 Duffryn
	46 Maindee	

Response	21/22	22/23	Prevention		Protection	
Fires	753	962	Home Fire Safety Checks	1,067	Audits carried out	46
False Alarms	1,068	1,127	% over 65	45.6%	Site Specific Risks Info.	161
RTCs	72	80	School engagement		School sites	53
Other SSCs	288	336	127 sessions	5,467 young people		

Population	2011	2021
Total	145,736	159,587
16 and under	37,383	38,957
Over 65	23,751	27,063
Single person households aged over 66		8,495

Environment	
Area km^2	190
Cadw Listed Buildings	435
Scheduled Monuments	70
High Rise Buildings	14

Rhondda Cynon Taf

	3 Wholetime with On-Call complement and 6 On-Call Fire and Rescue Stations	
	9 Treorchy (On-Call)	15 Pontypridd (Wholetime/On-Call)
	10 Tonypandy (Wholetime/On-Call)	16 Hirwaun (On-Call)
	11 Ferndale (On-Call)	17 Aberdare (Wholetime/On-Call)
	13 Gilfach Goch (On-Call)	18 Abercynon (On-Call)
	14 Pontyclun (On-Call)	

Response	21/22	22/23	Prevention		Protection	
Fires	906	822	Home Fire Safety Checks	2,278	Audits carried out	81
False Alarms	1,078	1,072	% over 65	46.7%	Site Specific Risks Info.	194
RTCs	165	156	School engagement		School sites	113
Other SSCs	399	555	170 sessions	6,318 young people		

Population	2011	2021
Total	234,410	237,651
16 and under	56,356	54,510
Over 65	40,073	46,626
Single person households aged over 66		14,049

Environment	
Area km^2	424
Cadw Listed Buildings	373
Scheduled Monuments	89
High Rise Buildings	5

Torfaen

2 Wholetime and 2 On-Call Fire and Rescue Stations	
32 Cwmbran (Wholetime)	34 Abersychan (On-Call)
33 New Inn (Wholetime)	39 Blaenavon (On-Call)

Response	21/22	22/23	Prevention		Protection	
Fires	302	418	Home Fire Safety Checks	856	Audits carried out	62
False Alarms	601	653	% over 65	53.0%	Site Specific Risks Info.	103
RTCs	43	42	School engagement		Schools	32
Other SSCs	164	186	65 sessions	2,890 young people		

Population	2011	2021
Total	91,075	92,276
16 and under	22,112	20,946
Over 65	16,370	19,155
Single person households aged over 66		5,694

Environment	
Area km^2	126
Cadw Listed Buildings	260
Scheduled Monuments	22
High Rise Buildings	3

Vale of Glamorgan

1 Wholetime, 1 Wholetime with On-Call complement and 2 On-Call Fire and Rescue Stations	
4 Cowbridge (On-Call)	20 Barry (Wholetime/On-Call)
19 Llantwit Major (On-Call)	22 Penarth (Wholetime)

Response	21/22	22/23	Prevention		Protection	
Fires	300	372	Home Fire Safety Checks	1,184	Audits carried out	39
False Alarms	613	676	% over 65	51.4%	Site Specific Risks Info.	202
RTCs	75	90	School engagement		Schools	55
Other SSCs	225	257	130 sessions	4,925 young people		

Population	2011	2021
Total	126,336	131,939
16 and under	30,305	29,953
Over 65	23,055	28,990
Single person households aged over 66		8,491

Environment	
Area km^2	335
Cadw Listed Buildings	745
Scheduled Monuments	113
High Rise Buildings	13

South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's Audits 2022-2023

Audit of Accounts

Each year Audit Wales audits the Service's financial statements. Audit of our accounts for 2022-2023 has been delayed by Audit Wales from the usual deadline of 31st July to 30th November. The associated Notice of Completion will be published once the audit is completed.

We have been consistently below budget on both capital and net expenditure for the last three years.

Accountancy

	Audited **2021-2022 £Million**	Published **2022-2023 £Million**	Budgeted **2023-2024 £Million**
Employee Related Costs	61.1	67.0	68.7
Premises Related Expenses	5.3	5.6	6.3
Training Expenses	1.4	1.7	1.8
Supplies and Services	4.2	6.2	5.8
Transport Related Expenses	1.4	1.6	1.6
Contracted Services	0.8	1.2	1.2
Capital Costs / Leasing	4.1	4.6	5.1
Income	-4.3	-5.9	-1.0
Total	**74.0**	**82.0**	**89.4**

Our budget for 2023-2024

Capital Programme	**£16.4m**
Property	£10.3m
Vehicles	£5.0m
ICT Equipment	£864k
Equipment	£240k

Revenue Grants	**£2.5m**
Private Finance Initiative Grant	**£926k**

Internal Audits

Our internal audit programme is an integral part of our improvement process, providing an objective perspective on aspects of our service. These audits are carried out by TIAA, our contracted internal auditor. Each audit assesses an area of activity against four levels of assurance (substantial, reasonable, limited or none), and recommends actions to address areas for improvement. These actions are transferred to our Business Management Information System (BMIS) where they are monitored until implementation is complete.

During 2022-2023 12 audits were scheduled and reports have been received for nine, four of which were rated substantial assurance and five were rated reasonable assurance.

Audit Name	Assurance Level	No. of Actions
Assurance Review of GDPR	Substantial	4
Assurance Review of HR Management - Training	Substantial	1
Assurance Review of HR Management - Well-being	Substantial	1
Assurance Review of Mitigating Controls	Substantial	1
Assurance Review of Network Security	Reasonable	4
Assurance Review of Rosters	Reasonable	5
Compliance Review of Station Visits	Reasonable	8
Assurance Review of Key Financial Controls	Reasonable	1
Assurance Review of Collaboration - Co-location	Awaiting Report	
Assurance Review of Payroll	Reasonable	3
Assurance Review of Contract Management	Awaiting Report	
Assurance Review of Sustainable Procurement	Awaiting Report	

In addition, a follow up review audit was undertaken on actions arising from 15 audits carried out between 2019 and 2022. This review showed that 18 actions had been implemented, 11 remain outstanding, and one recommendation was considered but action was not deemed necessary.

External Audits

Audit Wales carries out an annual audit of our strategic and improvement planning to confirm these meet the legal requirements from Welsh Government, set out in legislation including the National Framework 2016 and the Measure (Wales) 2009.

They ensure we are continually planning for improvement, by setting objectives, and assess our progress and reporting on those objectives. This annual audit is retrospective, covering the last financial year. The report of our 2021-2022 Performance Audit confirmed we are meeting our obligations:

> "I certify that I have audited South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority) assessment of its performance in 2021-22 in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) and my Code of Audit Practice. As a result of my audit, I believe that the Authority has discharged its duties under sections 15(2), (3), (8) and (9) of the Measure and has acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance sufficiently to discharge its duties."

A programme of annual focus audits is also carried out by Audit Wales to review specific areas of activities for the three Fire and Rescue Services in Wales. In 2022-2023 this focussed on Fire False Alarm Reduction. The report was published on 27th July 2023 detailing five recommendations with the comment that:

> "The Authority has made progress in its approach to managing fire false alarms. Making better use of data and learning from elsewhere will identify opportunities to better manage performance and risks."

Our Strategic Themes - Supporting WFGA

The table below sets out the eight Strategic Themes which are the foundation for our Strategic Plan 2020-2030. Our annual improvement objectives are built within these themes, which also structure our priorities and planning as we work to deliver on our mission statement:

"To make South Wales safer, by reducing risk."

We have mapped these themes to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFGA) to demonstrate how our priorities contribute to the seven well-being goals.

Strategic Theme

Keeping you Safe

Focussing on prevention work to help reduce the need for you to call us.

Supports WFG Goals		Supports PSB Objectives	

Responding to your Emergency

Ensuring we respond quickly and effectively when you need us.

Supports WFG Goals		Supports PSB Objectives	

Working with Partners

Working with the South Wales PSBs and other partners to deliver a fire and rescue service that meets your needs.

Supports WFG Goals		Supports PSB Objectives	

Engaging and Communicating

Ensuring all our communities and staff are involved in helping us provide an excellent service.

Supports WFG Goals		Supports PSB Objectives	

Protecting our Environment

Carrying out our activities in a way that helps sustain the planet for our future generations.

Supports WFG Goals		Supports PSB Objectives	

Using Technology Well

Continually look to use the latest technology where it can improve our service to you.

Supports WFG Goals		Supports PSB Objectives	

Strategic Theme
Valuing our People
Supporting a diverse workforce that represents your community, is well trained and motivated to deliver our service.

Supports WFG Goals		**Supports PSB Objectives**	

Continue to Work Effectively
Ensuring our service provides value for money and is clearly accountable.

Supports WFG Goals		**Supports PSB Objectives**	

WFG Goals

- A Resilient Wales
- A Wales of Cohesive Communities
- A Healthier Wales
- A Globally Responsible Wales
- A Prosperous Wales
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A More Equal Wales

PSB Objectives

- Safer Communities
- Best Start
- Reduce Social & Economic Inequalities
- Working Together
- Cities that Work
- Getting Involved
- Protect the Environment
- Employability, Skills & Opportunities
- Healthy Lifestyles

Keeping You Safe

Supporting the following Well-being Goals:

A resilient Wales

A Wales of cohesive communities

A healthier Wales

A globally responsible Wales

What does this mean?

By Keeping You Safe, we will work to reduce the risk of fire and related injuries in domestic, business and other premises. Our work to reduce deliberate fires, including wildfires and refuse, and on water safety will ensure communities are able to enjoy outdoor environments in safety. Our road safety activities will make travel safer.

Focussing on prevention work to help reduce the need for you to call us

How we will keep you safe:

- Reduce the impact of false alarms on our resources
- Reduce the number of fires in the home and understand the causes and behaviours of them
- Reduce the number of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)
- Reduce the number of deliberate fires
- Improve safety in and around water
- Improve fire safety in buildings in our communities

What we planned to do in 2022-2023 and what we have achieved so far

Use information to identify vulnerable individuals and groups to prioritise the delivery of our services, and work on an all-Wales basis to apply risk rating of our Home Safety Checks

All-Wales subgroups have worked on establishing a unified risk rating. This will enable us to improve service delivery via risk stratification, support partnerships and develop training. As our partnership referrals have been re-energised, we have been able to utilise data systems to support stations in identification of high-risk groups and those who are most vulnerable by using a risk-based calculation.

Maximise opportunities to complete home visits for vulnerable persons in our communities as we emerge from restrictions caused by Covid-19

We developed a profile to better understand those most at risk of accidental fires in the home. This aligned with nationally identified risk factors, including age, mobility, use of smoking materials and socio-economic factors, and has helped shape our identification of vulnerable persons. In addition to this, we have reintroduced our falls referrals pathways which provide a referral route to address this risk factor. Our partnership work with colleagues in health and care services has built to cover hospital discharges and dementia support. Partnership development with Social Housing organisations and others who can help identify isolated households has continued. Our aim is to complete a home fire safety check following all domestic incidents, making every contact count.

Relaunch the Learning Evaluation After the Fire (LEAF) initiative, to better understand experience of accidental dwelling fires and support those who have experienced them

LEAF has been reviewed and it is being piloted. Incidents meeting the project criteria are allocated to Home Safety Practitioners to carry out LEAF visits – they can provide extra support where needed as well as completing a questionnaire.   The results of this, along with information collected during home safety checks and at incidents, will help support the understanding of behaviours of individuals during and following on from accidental dwelling fires.

Continue to work with partners to deliver vital road safety education surrounding the new Welsh Government initiative reducing the 30mph speed limit to 20mph in certain areas

We have worked with Welsh Government to produce a presentation titled 'Just a Minute' to raise awareness of speed limit changes.   This, coupled with our behavioural change model that was a joint initiative with Go-Safe and Welsh Government, has been rolled out to over 550 members of the public at various locations across South Wales.

Implement training exercise programmes aligned to the risks within each station area and to Joint Fire Control (JFC) training plans

The year's exercise programme was based on scenarios identified as high risk.   Groups of fire and rescue stations responded to briefs that included a fire in a block of flats, road traffic collisions involving multiple vehicles and an incident involving chemicals at a commercial premises.   144 separate exercises took place to test our response and support our local community risk management plans.

Business Fire Safety and High Rise Buildings

We have continued our work to ensure safety in high rise buildings by liasing with developers, Welsh Government, responsible persons – in the last year we prepared for our Phase 3 audit programme to ensure building owners are aware of deficiencies and their responsibilities to rectify. These audits commenced in 2023-2024 and are supported by our collaborative work on building safety.

Responding to your Emergency

Supporting the following Well-being Goals:

A resilient Wales

A healthier Wales

What does this mean?

This focuses on responding efficiently and effectively to any emergency and provides assurance that we are ready to meet the changing needs of our communities, from an ageing population to the effects of climate change and new technology such as electric vehicles.

Ensuring we respond quickly and effectively when you need us

How we will respond to your emergency:
- Respond effectively when you need us
- Do all we can to ensure our On-Call Duty System (OCDS) crews are available
- Train our firefighters, emergency fire control staff and other staff to respond to current and future risks in our community.

What we planned to do in 2022-2023 and what we have achieved so far:

Identify realistic venues across the Service area to deliver training aligned to key risks and areas of operational development

Our exercise programme focussed on scenarios based on locally identified risk with groups of fire and rescue stations responding to briefs that included: fire in a block of flats, RTC involving multiple vehicles and chemical incidents at commercial premises. In total 144 exercises have taken place to test our response and support our station community risk management plans (station CRMPs).

Explore opportunities to improve the recruitment process for On-Call firefighters

We streamlined the On-Call recruitment process so that successful applicants begin initial training sooner. A new On-Call Development booklet gives a four-week plan prior to the initial course. This has improved retention as recruits were better prepared. In addition to this, we held almost 40 On-Call recruitment events during the year and by the end of February we had recruited nearly twice the number of On-Call firefighters as we had recruited in 2021-2022.

Review resilience in teams across the Service to ensure core activities are sustainably supported in challenging times

Within our revamped Personal Review process, the Pathways programmes offer training courses aligned to individual development routes. This includes a course on Resilience: Building your own personal toolkit, that introduces the concept of resilience and highlights the effect that it can have upon individuals and their colleagues. This course is suitable for both uniform and corporate personnel.

Replace three rescue tenders in our fleet with new vehicles, upgraded to Type C water rescue capability

Late in 2022, we took delivery of three new rescue tenders that had been upgraded to Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Type C water rescue capability following research to procure a suitable chassis.   Our specialist coachbuilders were able to build to a specification meeting the Service's requirements.   These are located at Pontypridd, Ely and Merthyr Tydfil Fire and Rescue Stations to enhance their search capabilities and non-powered boat rescue operations, including flood response.

Carry out a minor equipment replacement project, trialling next generation wet weather work wear, reciprocating saws and battery operated RTC equipment

A project to replace some minor equipment including wet weather work clothing, reciprocating saws and battery operated RTC equipment was undertaken and completed.

Secure a collective agreement with our representative bodies to implement a trial of a revised flexible rostering system on fire and rescue stations

An effective flexible rostering system has now been agreed in principle by the Senior Management Team.   This system will be reviewed annually at the request of any of the parties concerned, as appropriate, to ensure that it remains effective for all.   Regular reviews should enable that there are optimum crew levels by using advanced planning and matching demands to resources.

Working with Partners

Supporting the following Well-being Goals:

A resilient Wales

A Wales of cohesive communities

A globally responsible Wales

A prosperous Wales

What does this mean?

Well-established partnerships help us to deliver service improvements for the communities of South Wales. Collaboration with others means that we avoid duplication of resources, making best use of public money. It also creates a better experience for the public as our understanding of other organisations and services increase, we can signpost to other providers and they can refer to us.

Working with South Wales PSBs and other partners to deliver a fire and rescue service that meets your needs

How will we work with our partners:

- Work with PSBs to support our communities
- Work with our partners to deliver our services where they are needed
- Review and evaluating our existing partnerships

What we planned to do in 2022-2023 and what we have achieved so far:

Work with Chwarae Teg, a charity inspiring, leading and delivering gender equality in Wales, to support the HR reviews we are undertaking, including our recruitment activity

In September 2022 we were shortlisted for a FairPlay Employer award by Chwarae Teg on our commitment to creating a gender-equal Wales. This has been greatly supported by the increase in female wholetime firefighter applications from 10% in 2021 to 12% in 2022. 14% of those female applicants were successful compared to 6% of male applicants.

Continue to support the current PAS (Primary Authority Scheme), working in partnerships with businesses in order to achieve national consistency in delivering fire safety advice and regulatory activity. Exploring new partnerships and innovative ways of collaborating with social housing groups

Support of the current PAS has continued, working in partnership with businesses and social housing partners to achieve national consistency in delivering fire safety advice and regulatory activity. This includes work with Community Housing Cymru to provide advice to their members across Wales.

Community Safety

Partnership referrals have also been re-energised with a review of our current agreements. We have appointed a new Partnership Manager within the Community Safety & Partnerships structure to enhance partnership working. As well as encouraging partnership referrals, we will offer awareness training and ensure that our own onward referral process to other agencies is current and meets the needs of our communities.

Rent Smart Wales

In March 2023, the Service entered a new partnership with Rent Smart Wales who assist landlords in Wales to comply with the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 obligations and provide advice on renting safe and healthy homes. This partnership arrangement includes making onward referrals following home safety checks in privately rented properties which are non-compliant with fire safety standards.

The partnership aligns with the new legislation that came into force on the 1st December 2022. The 'Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016' has changed the way that landlords are able to rent their properties to ensure that they are maintained to a certain standard - this includes electrical safety testing and ensuring working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are fitted.

Engaging and Communicating

Supporting the following Well-being Goals:

A resilient Wales

A Wales of cohesive communities

A more equal Wales

A Wales of vibrant culture & thriving Welsh language

What does this mean?

We make sure that our communities and staff are involved in helping us provide an excellent community service, by offering a range of opportunities for our staff and citizens to help shape our activities now and in the future. We will also look to gain more views on how we share information.

Ensuring all our communities and staff are involved in helping us provide an excellent service

How we will engage and communicate:

- By involving our communities and making sure they have their say in what we do
- By helping to keep our communities safe by delivering safety education and attending community events

What we planned to do in 2022-2023 and what we have achieved so far:

Engage with under-represented groups in order to encourage a more diverse range of job applicants to join our Service

We have focussed on diversity within recruitment and In December 2022 the recruitment and engagement teams attended Dar-Ul-Isra mosque in Cathays, Cardiff for their first annual Black and Ethnic Minority-focused Job Fair. We continue to identify opportunities to showcase employment opportunities, involving local stations in raising awareness.

Maintain effective awareness of high impact community events along with a return to station-based events as Covid-19 restrictions are eased in order to promote Risk Reduction topics and enhance relationships with local partners and communities

Fire and rescue stations have now returned to hosting events and activities after the restrictions that Covid-19 placed upon this. As our stations are embedded within their local communities, we welcome engagement from all areas such as youth groups making station visits to being a venue for falls clinics with NHS colleagues. We are keen to find additional opportunities to develop this by working with PSBs and other partners.

Develop a Communications and Engagement Strategy

We have produced a Communications and Engagement Strategy which is being implemented. This strategy has been developed with the aim of promoting our communication approaches and highlighting how we adhere to the strategic objectives of the Service. The strategy has been circulated internally and will be available on our website.

Continue to trial a variety of engagement methods with our communities

Non-digital methods are considered in each major campaign plan and referenced in our Communications and Engagement Strategy.   Methods employed, such as for our Christmas safety campaign and Wholetime firefighter recruitment campaigns, include use of billboard vehicles, leaflets, brochures, newspaper adverts, radio and TV, outdoor banners, and face-to-face engagement events.

Re-establish the Momentum Project, a scheme that assists survivors of domestic abuse and helps the whole family to build confidence.

The Momentum Project has been paused

Further develop Business Fire Safety advice and guidance on our website

We have enhanced the range of business fire safety information on offer on our website. It covers responsibilities, false alarm reduction, fire doors, sprinklers, penalties, and consequences along with lots of other useful guidance for business owners and employers.

See the following link for further information.

Continue to support cultural change by promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives and solutions, encouraging staff involvement and participation

Over the last year EDI talks have been part of every induction session and in May 2022 a Middle Leaders' Engagement Day focussing on the topic of inclusion was held and attended by over 100 staff.   The EDI Lead is currently talking to a range of teams to ascertain the requirements for EDI for each team and championing inclusion across the Service.

Black History Month events (Oct 2022) included promotion across social media, a live Q&A session with two firefighters for their lived experiences, updated staff profiles (of people from black communities) and promotion of these profiles and their stories at 999 Day at Cardiff Bay.

Protecting our Environment

Supporting the following Well-being Goals:

A globally Responsible Wales

A healthier Wales

A resilient Wales

A Wales of cohesive communities

What does this mean?

We have a strong community focus to our work, making the natural environment safe and accessible. Knowledge of protected sites and support for local action is key, from working with schools to supporting local partnerships.

Carrying out our activities in a way that helps sustain the planet for our future generations

How we will protect our environment:

- Reduce the usage of single use materials
- Expand the use of electric vehicles
- Reduce our energy use and carbon footprint
- Consider how our activities impact on the environment
- Reduce the amount of waste produced (New 2022-2023)

What we planned to do in 2022-2023 and what we have achieved so far:

Increase the number of electric vehicle charging points at HQ and our Fire and Rescue Stations

We installed EV charging points at 12 sites by April 2023 and completed a further 26 locations by the end of May 2023. This increased availability has expanded our opportunities for greener travel as we encourage the move to electric vehicles for our staff and crews.

Secure funding to purchase two more large electric vans

Our fleet now includes 41 electric vehicles. These have increased our efficiency and helped us reduce our carbon emissions and pollution from tailpipe emissions. In addition to this we have implemented an ongoing replacement scheme with the aim of moving to a greener fleet of vehicles.

Give greater consideration to ways of reducing vehicle movements, and our use of single use and non-recyclable materials to deliver against our Carbon Reduction Plan

We have signed up to the Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan and Gwent public sector Healthy Travel Charters.   In 2022 we met all our commitments for the Cardiff Healthy Travel Charter and will be moving to Level 2 of the Gwent Travel Charter. We are aiming to embed sustainable travel across the whole Service.

Implement and utilise an external carbon footprint tracker

Our Sustainability Team reviewed our carbon emissions footprint and recalculated our baseline for 2018-2019 at 9,290 tonnes CO_2e. In 2022-2023 this reduced to 9,188 tonnes CO_2e looking at the four categories of Business Mileage, Energy, Fleet and Supply Chain. We are working on a further revision which will allow us to compare our carbon emissions more easily with other public bodies.

Introduce monitoring of printing volumes to reduce paper usage

We have implemented a new print facility contract, replacing multi-function printers at HQ, Occupational Health and Cardiff Gate Training and Development Centre.   These new and more efficient models allow us to track print volumes and to date we have seen a reduction of 43% in A4 copier paper purchase.

Rollout new drying technology in all Fire and Rescue Stations

This rollout has continued with 17 stations completed and work due to be carried out on the 10 remaining On-Call fire and rescue stations.   This technology is dry sensitive and will auto 'shut off' when materials are dry, which saves energy and reduces costs.

Regularly review and monitor our waste recording

A new waste contract was awarded and rolled out to all sites which will be completed by the end of 2023-2024.   This contract will increase our recycling capabilities, enable us to monitor our waste, and drive us forward in our quest for sustainability.

Develop a formal Sustainability Engagement Strategy

We have now finalised our Sustainability Engagement Strategy and implementation has taken place, with information being made available for our employees and the wider public. This strategy includes details on how we are progressing with a reduction on our carbon footprint.

Progress solar panel installation at HQ and Barry Fire and Rescue Station and look to complete further installations across the Service in the future

Work at HQ has been postponed following preliminary surveys. Specification and contract for Barry Fire and Rescue Station have been progressed and surveys carried out. Tender process and completion of works expected by end of 2023-2024. Work on a long-term strategy is underway with Energy Cymru to explore feasibility for other sites.

Our Carbon Reduction Plan can be viewed HERE.

Using Technology Well

Supporting the following Well-being Goals:

A resilient Wales

A globally responsible Wales

A healthier Wales

What does this mean?

In an increasingly digital world, we must be responsible in our use of technology and data management. Our systems therefore continually develop to ensure security of data while assisting our activities.

Continually look to use the latest technology where it can improve our service to you

How will we use technology well:

- Using the most suitable technology and equipment to improve our services
- Reviewing the standard and use of technology and equipment across the service

What we planned to do in 2022-2023 and what we have achieved so far:

Commence a personal development recording and learning management system project, to ensure e-learning packages are compliant with legislation, National Operational Guidance and Service policy

March saw the release of the new Learning Management System (LMS) known as 'e-Hyb'. This LMS is where staff will find e-learning, and a self-service facility to book onto Masterclasses and other events. It hosts all non-technical or 'soft skills' and development for all staff across the Service.

There are a number of Service-wide mandatory courses that are implemented at induction stage including An Introduction to Unconscious Bias, Inclusive Language and Communication and Inclusive Leadership (for line managers). Statistics suggest that these have been successful with 78% of staff having completed Unconscious Bias training, 72% having completed Inclusive Language and Communication and 83% of line managers having completed Inclusive Leadership training.

Migrate to Microsoft Office 365, including the use of Microsoft Office Teams for virtual meetings

The phased roll out of Microsoft 365 started in April 2022. It was rolled out by department to reduce the risk of negative impact on working practices, ensuring continuity, while training was provided to encourage adoption of the new features and systems. This facility has provided more efficient communication within the Service and reduced the requirement for travel for meetings.

Launch our new Media Studio so we can create and deliver higher quality multi-media content more quickly to digital channels

The media studio has now been completed and this revamp has meant that we can host livestream Q&A sessions for events such as Black History Month

and to aid On-call recruitment. The studio allows us to process videos and support our internal communications needs.   The Media Team has also worked with the training support unit at Cardiff Gate Training and Development Centre on multi-camera livestreams for passing out parades and other events.

Develop and roll out a training package for the new Thermal Imaging Cameras (TICs)

We have successfully upgraded to new lighter, smaller cameras which provide better quality images. A training package for these new TICs has been developed and rolled out to all relevant operational personnel.

Maximise use of geospatial tools to assist caller location identification

We continue to explore use of geospatial tools such as What3Words to aid location of incidents, which will be of particular benefit for outdoor fires and road traffic collisions.   We are also working with Ordnance Survey to develop the way we use location data and benefit from their innovation in developing data tailored to emergency service needs.

Valuing our People

Supporting the following Well-being Goals:

A more equal Wales

A healthier Wales

A prosperous Wales

A Wales of vibrant culture & thriving Welsh language

What does this mean?

We recognise and value our people as the most important asset in achieving our objectives and delivering excellent service to our communities. To succeed we need the right people, with the right skills and values, in the right place at the right time. Our workforce should also represent the communities we serve, be diverse, and have access to development opportunities to ensure they have rewarding careers.

Supporting a diverse workforce that represents your community, is well trained and motivated to deliver our service

How we will value our people:
- Attract a workforce that reflects and represents our communities
- Develop our people by identifying training and development opportunities
- Support our people to feel well, healthy and happy at work
- Deliver on the recommendations of the Investors in People report
- Encourage and support a bilingual culture across the service (New 2022-2023)

What we planned to do in 2022-2023 and what we have achieved so far:

Scope and conduct a review of On-Call arrangements and introduce pre-course learning for On-Call recruits by the end of 2022

The review has been completed leading to streamlining of the On-Call recruitment process, bringing successful applicants onto the initial training course sooner. A new On-Call Development booklet provides a four-week plan prior to the initial course. This has helped improve retention as recruits are better prepared.

Develop and launch our new Learning Pathways to further enhance staff development

We launched the 'Development Pathways' in early April 2023. Pathways are for everyone, across all roles, grades and aspirations. They are not just about promotion, but continuous development grounded in a meaningful and robust Personal Review.

Launch additional learning support for neurodiversity and personal reflection

The Learning and Development Team launched the Neurodiversity Awareness initiative in 2022. The team have created a dedicated Neurodiversity Intranet Page containing helpful information and guidance. They also launched a self-referral process for individuals who feel they have struggles linked to neurodiversity. This can help identify reasonable adjustments to assist with the work environment via the Do-It profiler. These can include guidance on ICT accessibility, support from occupational health or use of our Employee Assistance Programme.

Develop a line manager training package for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The e-Hyb portal delivers tailored training for line managers on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. Line managers can access training as and when they have availability to do so and can re-access if they need to refresh their knowledge and understanding.

Focus on mental health awareness for all On-Call and Corporate Staff, plus increase the number of MIND/Mental Health champions in the Service.

The Learning and Development team have recently purchased an e-learning 'Skills Booster' package. The package includes eight modules on health and well-being topics. These are in the form of videos, courses and micro-courses. In addition to this, our 'Your Health' Delivery Group continues to promote health and well-being by raising awareness of support available via our employee assistance programme, and menopause awareness. We continue to explore expansion of our network of Mind/Mental Health Champions.

Expand the development of well-being areas and community gardens on our stations and other premises

We have increased green spaces on some of our sites with the introduction of trees and additional planting. An example is the work carried out at Ogmore Vale Fire and Rescue Station where, with support from the local authority, the well-being area used by staff has been extended and trees planted. This will provide additional resources for our connections with the local community by supporting outdoor activities such as forest schools.

Become an accredited Real Living Wage employer

We achieved accreditation in July 2023. Living wage accreditation demonstrates that everyone working for the Service receives a minimum hourly wage, currently £10.90, that is higher than the government minimum for over-23s of £10.42 per hour. As well as being the 'right thing to do' there are also demonstrable business benefits that include higher productivity and engagement.

Continue to be part of a 'Community of Practice' hosted by Academi Wales to share ideas and best practice on implementing a bilingual culture in the workplace

We have continued to be a member of the 'All Wales Continuous Improvement Community', also known as the 'Community of Practice'. This supports our commitment to the Well-Being of Future Generations goal of 'a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language' and our statutory obligations under the Welsh Language Standards.

Implement the new development portfolio and Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) in our Business Fire Safety (BFS) department, which will map the pathway for new entrants from induction through to competency

A paper version of the BFS development portfolio has been created and is currently in use by new entrants, with work is underway to develop an online version. All necessary guidance documents and guidance flowcharts have been created. Training of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) has been completed to allow implementation of the IQA process which is now also underway. Documentation for the recording of maintenance of skills as a competent BFS officer has been created. In total we now have seven IQA qualified officers, with four of these also being fully competent in their BFS role.

Our People Plan can be found HERE

Continuing to Work Effectively

Supporting the following Well-being Goals:

A prosperous Wales

A Wales of vibrant culture & thriving Welsh language

A healthier Wales

What does this mean?

Our aim is to maximise value for money while improving our service. We will ensure that we continue to implement new and better ways of working, monitoring our activities by a rigorous process of internal audits and benchmarking against other fire and rescue services.

Ensuring our service provides value for money and is clearly accountable

How will we continue to work effectively:

- Being clear and publicly accountable
- Maximise value for money while improving our service
- Develop new ways of working

What we planned to do in 2022-2023 and what we have achieved so far:

Conduct approximately 70 days of internal audit on twelve different topic areas, eg, HR, Finance and Data Protection, to provide an assessment of assurance and compliance

Seventy audit days have now been carried out under our internal audit programme. Our internal audit contract was retendered and awarded for three years. In 2022-2023, 12 audits were carried out – for further details see page 27. The recommendations of these audits have informed our plans and are under regular review to ensure they deliver expected change.

Implement the recommendations of the Joint Fire Control (JFC) Review which address substantive posts, working conditions, structure, handback and environmental issues

The JFC Review proposed five recommendations. Considering these, we have appointed a new Head of JFC and on-site welfare facilities have been improved. Work continues in addressing the remaining recommendations.

Develop a Covid-19 Journey package to support future learning and public enquiry evidence

We have reviewed our experience of working through the Covid-19 pandemic and via the experience gained, we have acquired knowledge that will ensure that better ways of working are maintained. Documentary evidence has been compiled regarding the Service's response to the pandemic for future reference.

Research an upgrade to our finance and procurement system

Future procurement of a finance system is being considered in terms of procedure and timescales. In the meantime, our existing system is being upgraded which will provide value for money and system benefits.

Re-engineer courses to maximise candidate attendance and efficiencies by migrating theoretical training to instructor led online training

Water rescue courses and breathing apparatus (BA) courses have been redesigned to allow for instructor led online training with additional courses to follow.

Upgrade our USAR (Urban Search and Rescue) facility

The new USAR facility at Whitchurch Fire and Rescue Station was completed in March 2023, providing a base for Wales USAR.   This has been developed with support and funding from Welsh Government and will help ensure the highest levels of training and operational capabilities of personnel across Wales.

Promote our Innovation and Improvement scheme, encouraging ideas and suggestions from any member of staff

Amendments to the innovation and Improvement scheme are underway and when complete this will be promoted to staff, who will then be able to submit ideas to the committee.   This way of incorporating staff involvement in change is shown to have positive effects on well-being and employee satisfaction.

Carry out noise and vibration assessments across the Service

Following a project involving our Health, Safety & Well-being and Occupational Health teams, a report is being finalised on vibration risk. The noise assessment project was delayed but is now underway with the first report produced.

How we Developed Our Plan for 2024-2025

Our strategic planning process is a year-round cycle described in our **Strategic Planning Framework**. In the first six months we monitor our plans, with reports scrutinised within departments and by our Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA). We review the impact of our actions in the previous year and engage with our staff and stakeholders to gather the broad range of information required to create and publish our Annual Improvement Plan.
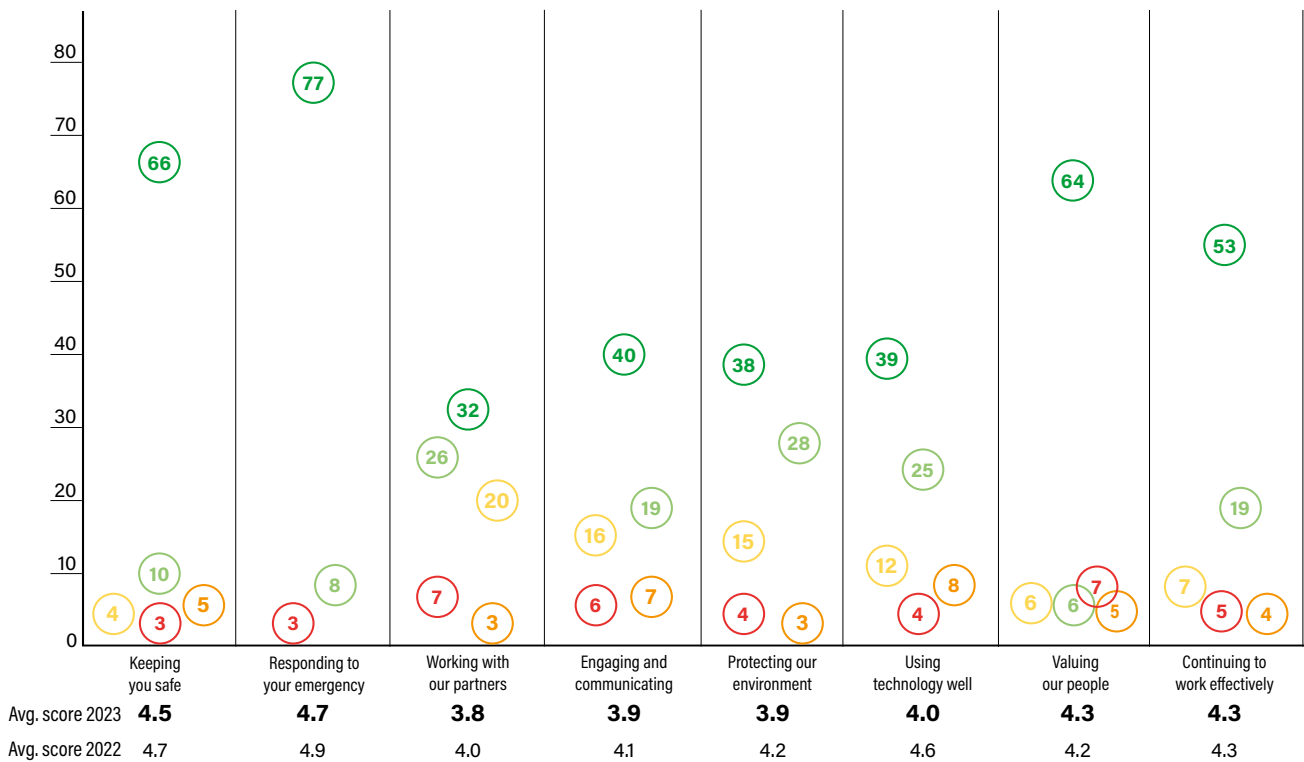
Initial Consultation

A three-week initial consultation was undertaken during June 2023 when we asked our staff, stakeholders and key partners to help us shape our plans. To ensure we captured a broad range of views at the formative stage of planning, we asked whether we had the right priorities and were doing what they thought we should be doing. The FRA use this feedback to inform their proposals for our strategic aims. The SMT also consider the feedback in a workshop session focussed on horizon scanning.

The survey, available in Welsh and English, was promoted by email to our stakeholder register and to all staff via email, internal newsletters, the staff app and on the Service intranet.

We received 88 responses the majority of which were from staff or others affiliated to the Service, with general agreement that all eight of our Strategic Themes remain important.

Strategic Theme Importance Rating

	Keeping you safe	Responding to your emergency	Working with our partners	Engaging and communicating	Protecting our environment	Using technology well	Valuing our people	Continuing to work effectively
Avg. score 2023	**4.5**	**4.7**	**3.8**	**3.9**	**3.9**	**4.0**	**4.3**	**4.3**
Avg. score 2022	4.7	4.9	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.6	4.2	4.3

Legend: ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

Strategic Theme Importance to Respondents (on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being very important and 1 being not important at all) – showing number of responses received across the scoring range.

Complaints and Compliments

We considered complaints to identify any recurring issues. A total of 61 complaints had been received in 2022-2023, which was an increase of 61% on the 38 received the previous year.   There were increases in two themes – Behaviour (from 18 to 41) and Social Media (four complaints with none in the previous year). No issues raised required changes to our procedures, but, where appropriate, advice and/or training was provided to individuals involved.

We received 82 positive messages and letters of appreciation during 2022-2023. This feedback is shared Service wide.

To all who attended the house fire, I'd like to say a massive thank you to you all for saving my life. Without you guys I really wouldn't be here now. You have given me a second chance at life and I'm making the most of it. You really are heroes, once again, thank you. (Feb 2023)

I want to say a massive THANK YOU to the firefighters that rescued me from forestry. My leg was broken in 3 places and my ankle was dislocated. I never would have made it out of there without you. (Feb 2023)

I am writing in relation to firefighters who attended my home. I want to say how professional they were and respectful of our home. They were delightful young men who were very friendly, they are a credit to your service. (Dec 2022)

Identifying priorities

As well as considering information from the initial consultation, we looked at demand by analysing incident trends alongside our performance, the wider context of our activities by horizon scanning and reviewing other plans, particularly from our PSB partners, and audit feedback to identify areas for improvement.

An SMT workshop was held to review consultation feedback, developing SWOT and PESTLE analysis exploring future priorities, risks and ways of working, to develop our proposed objectives for 2024-2025. Consultation responses were also reported to the FRA with feedback incorporated into our plans.

Meetings were held with Heads of Service and other managers to reflect on feedback and to identify priorities for 2024-2025, progressing from plans being implemented in the current year.

Colleagues in operational and risk reduction roles were invited to comment on the draft document before final review and sign off by the SMT and FRA.

Our high-level outline of our plans for 2024-2025 can be found on pages 54 to 61 with proposed changes highlighted.

The publication of this Annual Improvement Plan marks commencement of our 12-week consultation to inform our final plans for the coming year and beyond. We welcome all suggestions and feedback.

Consultation - Themes and Responses

Key themes	Issues raised
Valuing staff	Concerns emphasised the importance of caring for staff, particularly raising the impact of retention on workloads and well-being, and proposing a management restructure.
Focusing on performance	Responses suggested that the Service should focus on core responsibilities and questioned performance in these areas, suggesting that this should be evidenced. Certain activities were suggested as better served by other agencies to allow the Service to focus on operational functionality.
Recruitment and retention	Concerns were raised regarding the retention of On-Call personnel, and it was suggested that pathways to Wholetime employment could be improved as well as recruiting more female and minority ethnic firefighters. More flexible working opportunities for Corporate Staff was suggested.
Environmental impact	It was recognised that future planning should consider the Service's environmental impact and there were specific issues raised regarding vehicles on station and appliance movements.
Promotions and development pathways	There were concerns that promotions, workforce succession planning and development opportunities should be reviewed and improved.
Engaging with our communities	Increasing engagement with local communities to broaden the Service's reach beyond social media was suggested. However, it was also proposed that there should be less promotion activities such as open days and reduced social media presence.
Making more efficient use of technology	Responses commented on the impact of inefficient technology on work and the potential to use technology better to increase efficiency.

Our response

We acknowledge that there is work to do to ensure that our staff feel valued. We recognise that our staff are our greatest asset and strength. There have been a number of initiatives this year looking at our people's experience in the workplace and, when the results of these along with those of the Independent Culture Review are published, an action plan will be developed to address concerns and make the changes that we need. The Service will continue to implement well-being initiatives through the "Your Health Delivery Group" to address well-being concerns for all staff groups.

Staff retention is important to us. We have made changes to improve the training pathway for On-Call firefighters from initial recruitment to competent with staged salary increments during the development programme. To support retention, staff development is and will continue to be an area of focus for all roles. The Pathways programmes and masterclasses along with the e-Hyb facility on our Core HR system provide development and learning opportunities for all staff. "Maintaining Excellence" has been launched along with "Leading Myself" and "Leading Others". Development pathways for middle leaders are scheduled to roll out late 2023 and for strategic leaders during 2024. The operational training programme is continually updated and improved to ensure that our firefighters are trained to the highest standards.

Looking towards our impact on the environment, our Carbon Reduction Plan sets out our ambitions and the challenges we face. Design work is progressing well on the Net Carbon Zero design of New Inn Fire and Rescue Station. We are working towards implementing a light vehicle replacement policy to meet Welsh Government's 2030 target for zero emissions and are working with Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service to ascertain the feasibility of utilising bio-diesel. We encourage our staff to identify areas for improvement and acknowledge that they will have great ideas on how we can be more sustainable in our day-to-day operations to reduce our impact on the environment.

Our communities are at the heart of all we do and to ensure that we rebuild the connections that we all lost over the last few years we have embarked on a series of station and community events where we directly engage with members of the public. We welcome the appetite to increase direct engagement and will strive to turn that appetite into action in the coming years.

Frustration was expressed regarding inefficiency in the use of technology. We will be looking at ways to upskill our team members to harness the capabilities of the equipment and systems we currently have and to forge further improvements in both equipment available and the skills sets to utilise it in future. We are undertaking a major refresh of end-user computing devices. This refresh will update and improve the devices used by agile workers as well as remove older systems still in use. We are continuing to develop our online HR system to ensure full integration across HR teams and enhance self-service procedures.

There were a few areas that it was suggested that the Service place less focus on.

There was a view that the Service should pay less attention to making itself look good and instead focus more on doing a good job and looking after its staff. This clearly links with the view previously expressed that the Service needs to find ways to ensure that our people feel valued. In contrast to the view that we should engage directly with the public there was a converse view for events such as open days which were viewed as a waste of public money. Although these events cost money to run, they provide a valuable opportunity to engage with the public to share safety messages, involve the public in our decision making and to showcase our employment opportunities. We acknowledge that it would be beneficial to have more robust evaluation of these events so that the true value can be quantified.

It was also suggested that the Service should concentrate on its core duties and the things it is good at, leaving other activities that would be better served by other emergency services or partner agencies to them.   We work in a complex environment and cannot always operate in isolation – indeed, we are required to work in partnership in many areas as a central tenet of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Stopping this work would not provide the best outcomes for our communities that we are there to serve. It is, however, acknowledged that communication about why and how we work in partnership with other agencies and the benefits that it creates can be improved.

The use of media was under scrutiny with a leaning for the Service to focus less on media activities, especially social media. There was a view that social media activity could encourage adverse behaviours in our communities. The Service acknowledges that there is a risk with the use of media, however the benefits of engaging with our communities, sharing safety messages and celebrating successes needs to strike a balance which will be considered in future activity.

During the consultation we asked people if they could make one change what would it be. This yielded some interesting suggestions which will be fed into the action plan along with the other initiatives looking at our people's experience in the workplace. These suggestions included consideration of structure, recruitment and retention, hybrid working, promotions and pathways as well as availability and response.

What we plan to do in 2024-2025

Our vision remains to make South Wales safer by reducing risk. This aim, established in our Strategic Plan 2020-2030, is fundamental to our activities and shapes our planning which is structured around eight Strategic Themes, outlined earlier in this document.

As well as delivering an effective response to our communities when they need us, this model ensures our plans are aligned to the principle of the Well-being of Future Generations Act:

All public services should act in a manner which seeks to ensure the needs of the present are met, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The themes and related objectives have developed in consultation with our staff, communities, partners and other stakeholders. In the following pages, we outline our work in developing our proposals for 2024-2025 and outline our priorities for further development and improvement.

These plans are open to consultation for 12 weeks from publication of this Improvement Plan. You can find details of how to Have Your Say at the end of this document. Please take a few minutes to tell us what you think.

We are committed to building equality, diversity and inclusion into everything we do – from valuing and developing our people to delivering person-centred services to the communities of South Wales. You can find out more about how we plan to achieve this in our Strategic Plan and other key plans, available on our website or via links below.
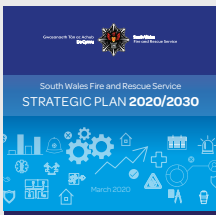
Our Strategic Plan 2020-2030

This document sets out our longer-term strategy to ensure we deliver an effective and sustainable service. It introduces the eight Strategic Themes covered in this update.
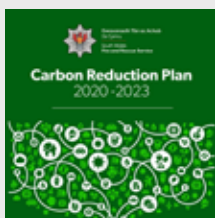
Our Carbon Reduction Plan 2020-2023

This plan sets out how we will continue to improve the ways in which we use our resources to ensure the least harm to our environment.

Our Strategic Equality Plan 2023-2026

Setting out our equality objectives for the next three years, this plan details how we will work toward our commitment to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion in all we do.

Our Home Safety Practitioners are trained to provide home safety advice to households identified as high risk. Their network of contacts with other agencies ensures the right support that it centred on individual needs.

Keeping you Safe

This means...

We will provide prevention of, and protection from, emergencies to keep our communities safe. Evidence suggests that our preventative activities have been extremely influential in the reduction of emergencies in recent years, a trend we are keen to maintain and improve. One of the key drivers for our preventative campaigns programme is the information we obtain from, and share with, other organisations, which allows us to develop specific campaigns based on statistical evidence.

Our Objectives:

- Reducing the impact of false alarms on our resources
- Reducing the number of fires in the home and understanding the causes and behaviours of them
- Reducing the number of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)
- Reducing the number of deliberate fires
- Improving safety in and around water
- Improving fire safety in buildings in our communities

Our priorities in 2024-2025 will include:

- Educating and advising on the requirements of the Fire Safety Order, to ensure those in control of workplaces or common parts of buildings containing two or more domestic premises are aware of their responsibilities. We will also advise and support them on the new legislation and guidance

- Ensuring we take an integrated and risk-based approach to the deployment of prevention and protection resources

- Improving our use of data and intelligence to target more effectively those most at risk of fire

- Enhancing our efforts to communicate water safety messages to those at greatest risk

- Educating building owners and managers about the impact of false alarms on the Service and their businesses

- Preparing for the impact of climate change on our communities (for example, increased wildfire and flooding) and working with partners to reduce the impact

Responding to your Emergency

This means...

We will always ensure that we provide an efficient and effective response to our communities when needed. This requires us to have highly trained personnel and the latest equipment available to ensure that the safety of our communities is never compromised. We will continue to invest in our firefighters and Joint Control Staff to ensure that they can respond to the wide range of incidents we face now and in the future.

Our Objectives:

- Responding effectively when you need us
- Doing all we can to make sure that our On-Call Crews are available
- Training our firefighters, emergency fire control staff and other staff to respond to current and future risks in our communities

Our priorities in 2024-2025 will include:

- Reviewing our operational training programme in response to the recommendations of Welsh Government's Thematic Review
- Establishing changes to driver training courses in response to Section 19 of the 2006 Road Traffic Act and monitoring any impact of extended course
- Developing collaborative working via the All-Wales Training Managers group, focussing on deliverables and integration with risk based working groups
- Implementing outcomes of our internal On-Call strategic review
- Systems update/upgrade for Joint Fire Control

Working with our Partners

This means...

We have a well-established and proud history of working with our partners to deliver measureable improvements, efficiencies and meeting future demands. This will include contributing to local priorities and assisting in improving community well-being. We recognise the benefits of working in partnership with other organisations to deliver best value services for the communities we jointly serve and that sharing knowledge and skills is at the heart of our Service's future.

Our Objectives:

- Working with Public Service Boards (PSBs) to support our communities
- Working with our partners to deliver our services where they are needed
- Reviewing and evaluating our existing partnerships

Our priorities in 2024-2025 will include:

- Working in collaboration with partners to identify those most at risk in our communities
- Improving our data sharing arrangements to support partnership working
- Developing our arrangements for partnership working to ensure those participating are able to realise maximum benefit from their involvement
- Maximise opportunities for colocation and flexibility, adapting the property portfolio in line with community risks and new operational requirements
- Engage with partners and other agencies on a collaborative approach to reducing our environmental impact

Involving and Communicating

This means…

We will improve the way we communicate and involve our staff, stakeholders, communities, and partners by taking a positive approach to communication. Communication is a key priority in making sure all are aware of the work we undertake, the challenges we face and can be involved in shaping our services of the future. We believe that we can effectively deliver our key messages through ensuring a continued focus on education, engagement, and communication. Working as part of a well-connected community can deliver wider improvement than working alone, therefore ensuring greater opportunity to keep residents, businesses and visitors to South Wales safer.

Our Objectives:

- Involving our communities and make sure they have their say in what we do
- Helping to keep our communities safe by delivering safety education and attending community events

Our priorities in 2024-2025 will include:

- Communicating better information on who we are and what we do
- Working with staff, stakeholders, communities, and partners to implement recommendations of the Independent Culture Review, co-creating improvements to the Service
- Asking our staff how we can improve communication
- Beginning work to develop a Citizens Forum, enabling diverse voices to shape the services we provide
- Mapping out our activities and our stakeholders to ensure we are involving appropriate groups.
- Recognising the work of stations in community support and involvement

Protecting and Enhancing our Environment

This means...

We know that our activities have an impact on the global and local environment and are committed to minimising any negative impacts. We have developed a Carbon Reduction Plan and a Biodiversity Plan which together propose a range of actions that focus on reducing our environmental impact and protecting and restoring biological systems. We commit to embracing renewable energies to support sustainability and the environmental goals of the WFGA.

Our Objectives:

- Implementing and embedding sustainable policies and procedures
- Exploring opportunities to decarbonise our fleet
- Reducing our energy usage and our carbon footprint
- Considering how our activities impact on the environment
- Reducing the amount of waste produced

Our priorities in 2024-2025 will include:

- Improving our waste management using data collected on waste streams
- Continuing to develop our response to wildfires
- Beginning development of our first carbon neutral station
- Continuing upgrades to our real fire training facility to reduce environmental impact
- Measuring the impact of our actions and reporting our progress
- Working with partners to protect our environment
- Identifying ways to enhance and develop our well-being areas and green spaces

Using Technology Well

This means...

Using technology well to improve our processes and systems to make them future proof, as we recognise that this plays a vital role in how well we deliver our services. From our operational firefighting techniques and equipment to our back-office support systems, we intend to maximise technological advances and improve service delivery. Technological development will make a positive contribution to the wider well-being of our staff and the communities we serve, ensuring operational resources are best placed to respond effectively to incidents.

Our Objectives:

- Using the most suitable technology and equipment to improve our services
- Reviewing the standard and use of technology and equipment across the Service

Our priorities in 2024-2025 will include:

- Upgrading appliance communication systems to provide additional applications for real-time use
- Making more efficient use of ICT to engage with our operational workforce
- Increasing the use of mobile technology
- Improving digital collaboration and working opportunities
- Providing increased resilience and security to our ICT systems
- Providing additional resources to support new and ongoing projects for Joint Fire Control

Valuing our People

This means...

Our workforce should represent the communities we serve, be diverse, equally valued and have access to development and professional opportunities. Our People Plan, Strategic Equality Plan and Mental Health and Well-being Strategy will support our work on recruitment, the gender pay gap, inclusion and health, and help develop the culture and behaviours needed within our Service. This will deliver improvements for both current/ future staff and users of our services. Increased staff participation in our online Shout forum will help us better understand staff issues and allow more staff to easily contribute to what we do.

Our Objectives:

- Attracting a workforce that reflects and represents our communities
- Developing our people by identifying training and development opportunities
- Supporting our people to feel well, healthy, and valued at work
- Delivering on the recommendations of the Investors in People report
- Encouraging and supporting a bilingual culture across the Service

Our priorities in 2024-2025 will include:

- Responding to the findings of the Independent Culture Review
- Transforming our People Services functions to provide optimum operational support and putting people at the heart of everything we do
- Reviewing On-Call retention rates
- Developing and monitoring training for all staff to deliver development of foundation skills, eg, ICT

Continue to Work Effectively

This means...

We always aim to demonstrate value for money and deliver our services at the lowest possible cost and highest possible standard. When considering how much to spend, the need to improve the way we provide our services whilst reducing risk in the communities of South Wales remains our priority. We will work on medium- and long-term planning, developing new ways of working and delivering our services against continued financial challenge and the changing risk profiles of our communities. We will support Fire and Rescue Authority Members and provide them with the information they need to effectively conduct their leadership and scrutiny roles.

Our Objectives:

- Being clear and publicly accountable
- Maximising value for money while improving our service
- Finding ways of working better and smarter

Our priorities in 2024-2025 will include:

- Exploring ways to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of our activities, including prevention activities to ensure they continue to make people safer
- Ensuring transparency and accountability by producing accessible, clear information for the public
- Assuring best value to the public through fair and robust procurement procedures, collaboration, partnership working and with due regard to the Service's Medium Term Financial Strategy

Welsh Language

We are committed to fulfilling our duty to ensure the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language and support those who choose to communicate via the medium of the Welsh language. In accordance with the Welsh Language Standards 2015, the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has received a Compliance Notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner setting out the Welsh Language Standards that apply to the Authority. This Compliance Notice is published on our website and gives details about what services citizens can expect to receive in Welsh. We seek to engage with Welsh speakers and learners to improve the overall standard of our service provision.

Alternative versions

We publish a "quick read" version of this plan and both versions are available on our website with "Speak the website" audio facility which also provides a translation option. If you would like this information in another format, please **contact us.**

Have Your Say

We are always looking for ways to improve our services and to ensure the information we provide is meaningful. All feedback is reviewed and considered as we develop our plans. For regular updates and invitations to take part in consultations and surveys, join our **Stakeholder Register**.

Consultation on our proposed priorities for 2024-2025 is open for 12 weeks from publication of this document – complete the survey here **Have Your Say 2023**.

You can contact us at any time using using any of the methods shown.

Write to us

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We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English.
We will respond equally to both and will reply in your language of choice without delay.

Our exercise programme includes multi-agency training in real-life settings. A recent event was held in the Severn Tunnel.