HM Fire Service Inspectorate

Local Area Inspection Angus

Integrity, Objectivity, and Fairness.

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Acknowledgements

Contents

1_The local area inspection programme

1. The Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016 sets out how Scottish Ministers expect the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) to operate and how, in part, its effectiveness and efficiency are to be measured. The Framework sets strategic priorities for the Service to achieve. In a change to the previous Framework, the 2016 Framework devolves responsibility for developing performance measures to the SFRS, albeit subject to ministerial approval. Subsequently, the SFRS Board approved a Performance Management Framework in 2018 (updated April 2021) to include 2020/21 corporate indicators. At the time of our inspection a public consultation on a new Framework had been taking place, which closed on 22 December 2021. The finalised new Framework is likely to be published during the Spring of 2022.

2. The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 (the 2005 Act) requires the SFRS to appoint a Local Senior Officer (LSO) for each local authority area in Scotland for the purpose of carrying out its functions in that area. The LSO for Angus also acts as LSO for the local authorities of Dundee City and Perth and Kinross. The LSO reports to the Head of Service Delivery for the relevant SFRS Service Delivery Area (SDA) (in this case the North SDA). The SFRS is also required by the 2005 Act to have a Local Fire and Rescue Plan for each local authority area, which sets out the SFRS's priorities and objectives for that local area; why they have been selected; how the SFRS intends to deliver them, and (insofar as is practicable) outcomes by reference to which the SFRS's service delivery in the local authority area can be measured. The fact that the 2005 Act is structured in this way is a clear demonstration of the Scottish Parliament's intention that the SFRS's service delivery should be considered both at the national and local authority levels.

3. Inspections of SFRS service delivery within local authority areas that examine the development and delivery of Local Fire and Rescue Plans, help to provide assurance about the way in which the SFRS is meeting this intention. By undertaking inspections of SFRS service delivery within local authority areas, HM Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI):

    ■ can provide assurance to Scottish Ministers and the public, that the SFRS is making adequate provision for local service delivery, and that local areas have access to specialist national resources, and make suggestions for improvement if necessary;

    ■ can take a detailed look at the nature and quality of service provision within local areas and can draw attention to significant matters and areas of good practice;

    ■ maintains a good level of awareness of the Service's functions and builds a record of how the Service is functioning; and

    ■ can gather intelligence that may inform, or cause to be undertaken, more strategic, thematic inspections of the SFRS.

4. The findings in our report follow the structure of the Framework. In adopting this approach we accept that there may be occasions when our observations could be reported against more than one of the strategic priorities contained in the Framework. We aim to ensure that our observations and text are allocated in the most appropriate place or places to give an understanding of our findings. There may however be occasions when it will be appropriate to repeat our observations against more than one priority.

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5.   During our local area inspections we look at a range of matters relevant to fire and rescue service delivery within the area being inspected, including any relevant issues arising from our thematic inspection work.

6.   In our inspections we aim to visit as many service delivery locations as we can, and speak to managers and a range of uniformed and support staff. We look at premises and equipment, and view a sample of records to enable us to understand the way in which business within the area is conducted. In this way we aim to cross-reference the SFRS's written plans and procedures, and what we are told about the local area by SFRS managers, with our own observations and discussions with local staff.

7.   We do not, however, carry out our local area inspections as a comprehensive audit. The sampling methodology that we adopt cannot identify all potential areas for improvement or examples of good practice: we intend that it should be a proportionate activity that provides an overview of the area, comparable with other local area inspections that we have carried out or will carry out in the future. The SFRS has a programme of internal station audits that involve a detailed analysis of fire station activity and records. We do not want to duplicate that work, although we do take these audits into consideration within our inspection.

8.   During our inspection of Angus we visited six fire stations in the area, speaking to the Retained Duty System (RDS) crews and two watches at Arbroath fire station, the only Wholetime Duty fire station in the area. Additionally we met with the RDS crew also based at Arbroath.

9.   We met with the LSO and local managers with the following areas of responsibility:

   ■ Prevention and protection
   ■ Service delivery
   ■ Training
   ■ Health and safety
   ■ Fire station supervision

10. We interviewed community safety staff, and support staff.

11. We also engaged with representatives of Angus Council and other partners.

12. In an attempt to gauge service users' opinion of the SFRS we contacted 23 out of the 25 Community Councils within Angus (two are currently not operating). Each was invited to complete a brief questionnaire which explored the relationship between the Community Council and the SFRS, sought awareness of SFRS local activity, asked about views of service quality, and suggested areas for improvement. We received one response which is discussed later in this report.

13. This report is a product of both our direct observation and interviews held with staff and partners of the SFRS, and reflects the circumstance at the time of our visits. Our fieldwork for this local area inspection was carried out periodically during November and December 2021, and February 2022.

2_About the area
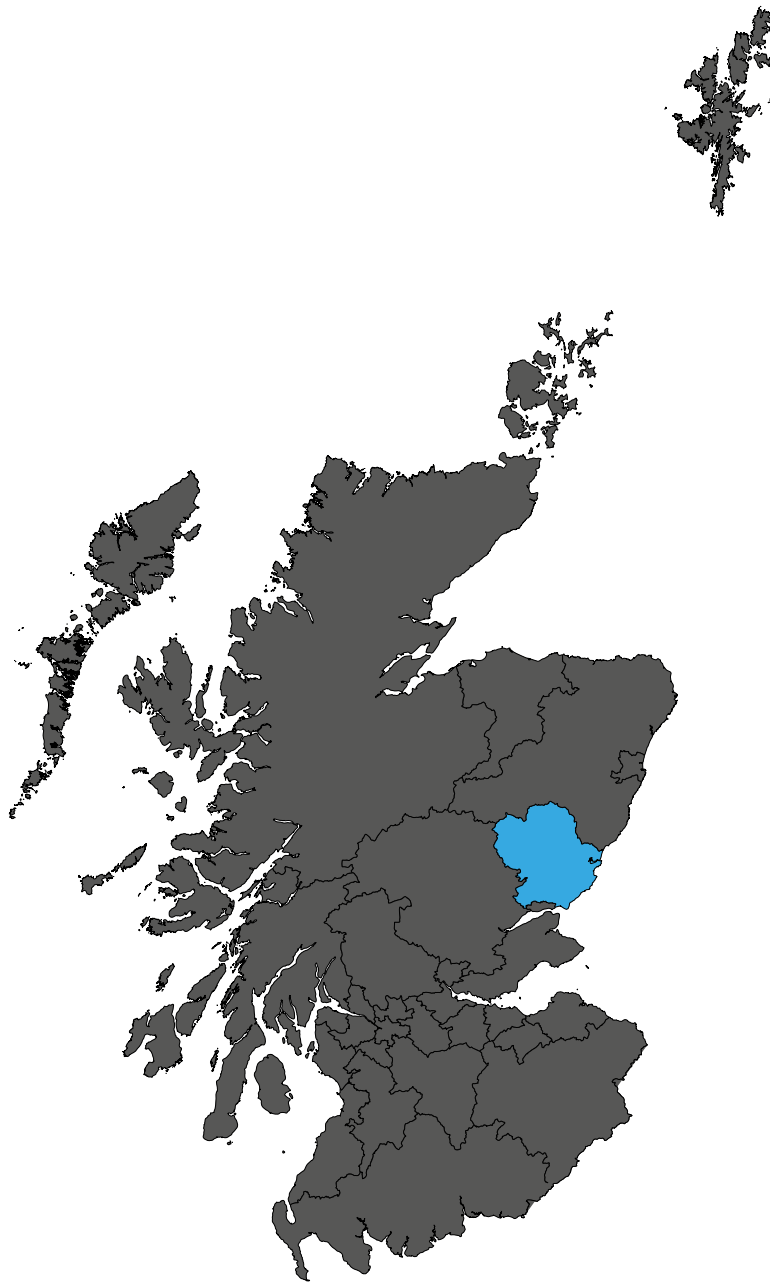
Figure 1 Scottish council area boundaries

14. Angus is the area shaded blue on the map in Figure 1. It covers an area of around 842 square miles. Approximately 75% of the population is concentrated primarily within the seven main towns of Forfar, Kirriemuir, Montrose, Brechin, Arbroath, Carnoustie and Monifieth. Angus has a border with the local authority areas of Dundee City, Perth and Kinross, and Aberdeenshire. In terms of the SFRS organisation structure, Angus is within the North SDA.

15. Angus is divided into eight council wards.

16. The population of Angus at the end of June 2019 was 116,200[1] making it the 17th-highest populated of the 32 local authority areas in Scotland. This is an increase of 0.1% from 116,040 in 2018. Between 1998 and 2019, the 25-to-44 age group saw the largest percentage decrease (-17.9%). The 65-to-74 age group saw the largest percentage increase (+47.5%). Around 2% of the Scottish population reside in Angus. The percentage of the population aged 65 and over, at 23.9%, is more than the overall percentage for Scotland of 19.1% in that age band. The ethnicity of the population of Angus as at the 2011[2] census was classified as 98.7% white (Scottish White: Other British White: Irish White: Other) and 0.8% Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British, with a further 0.5% classing themselves as an other ethnic group.

17. There are various operational risks in the area, including, major trunk roads, railways, harbours and ports, and various commercial, industrial, military, and heritage risks.

18. There are six fire stations in Angus. The locations are shown in Figure 2. Table 1 shows the fire station duty system, the resources based there and incident activity for 2020/21.
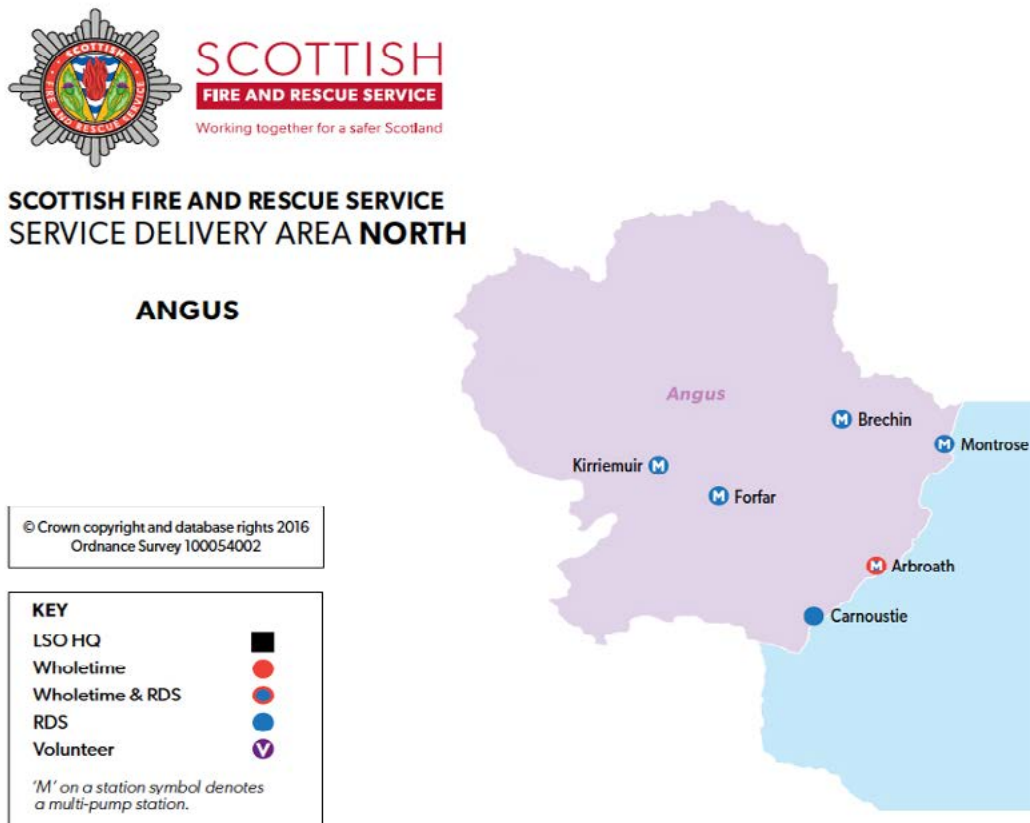

Figure 2 Fire station locations in Angus: source SFRS

1   National Records of Scotland, Council Area Profiles - https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/stats-at-a-glance/council-area-profiles
2   https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ods-web/area.html

Fire station	Duty system	Appliances	Activity*
Arbroath	Wholetime/ RDS	1 Rescue pump 1 Water tender ladder (RDS)	397
Brechin	RDS	1 Rescue pump 1 Water tender ladder	174
Carnoustie	RDS	1 Rescue pump	104
Forfar	RDS	1 Rescue pump 1 Water tender ladder 1 Environmental Protection Unit	269
Kirriemuir	RDS	1 Rescue pump 1 Water tender ladder	106
Montrose	RDS	1 Rescue pump 1 Water tender ladder	288

Table 1 Angus fire station information: source SFRS

*This is the number of times that an appliance from the fire station attended an incident. It is not an indication of the number of turnouts. The IRS data on which the activity totals are based exclude mobilisations which did not result in a direct incident attendance, for example, stand-by or where the appliance was turned back.

Employees[3].

19. The SFRS has 133 staff posts in the area; 7 (5.2%) of the staff identify themselves as female. The ethnicity of staff, where declared, reflects that of the local community.

Incident Statistics

20. Table 2 shows the number and type of incidents attended by the SFRS in Angus over a period of four years[4].

Incident type	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Primary fire	161	168	179	172
Secondary fire	182	201	145	204
Chimney fire	24	18	12	21
Road traffic collision	67	48	50	49
Other non-fire incident	211	207	214	242
False alarm (including non-fire false alarm)	1,012	988	907	802
Total incidents	**1,657**	**1,630**	**1,507**	**1,490**

Table 2 Incidents in Angus

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3   as at November 2019

4   SFRS, Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics (Scotland), http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/about-us/fire-and-rescue-statistics.aspx

Figure 3 below gives a visual reflection of the make-up of incidents within Angus for the most recent available statistics, 2020/21.
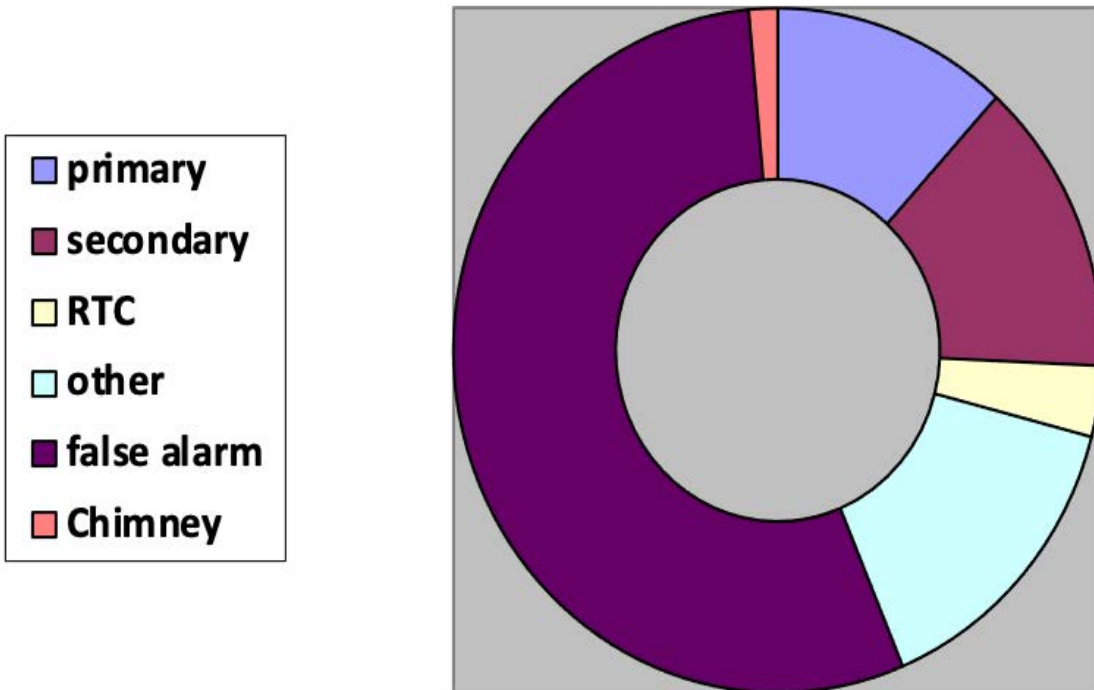
Figure 3: Angus incidents 2020/21

21.   Responding to false alarms represents 53.8% of all incidents attended by the SFRS in Angus in 2020/21. Unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS) from non-domestic premises made up 270 of these false alarms and therefore comprise 18.1% of all incidents. This equates to a rate per 100,000 population of 233.1 for Angus, which is below the rate for Scotland of 399.2 for UFAS incidents.

22.   The incident rates for 2020/21 are shown in Figure 4 benchmarked against the rates for Scotland. In Angus the rates per population for primary fires, secondary fires, fire false alarms are lower than the figures for Scotland; however, non-fire incidents are higher than for Scotland.

	primary fires	secondary fires	fire false alarm	non-fire incident
Angus	148.5	176.1	687.3	251.3
Scotland	172.3	276.8	856.6	232.2
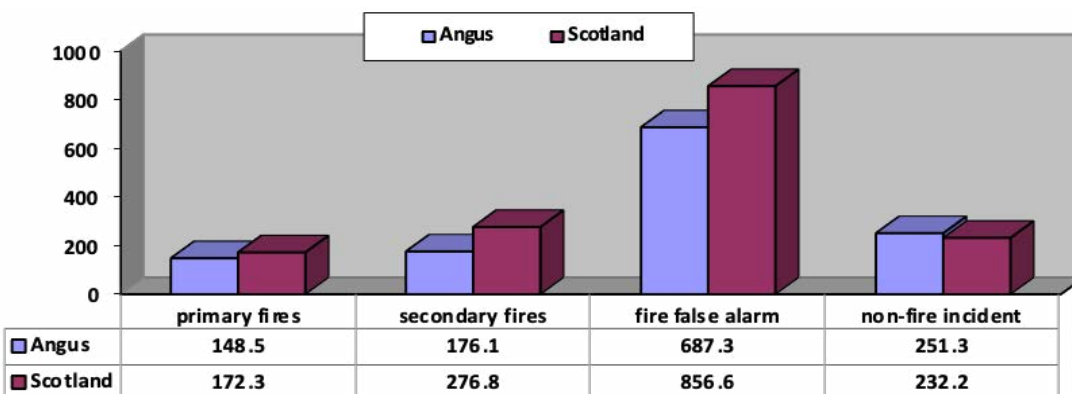
Figure 4: Incident rates per 100,000 population 2020/21 Angus and Scotland

3_Our findings

23. As mentioned earlier in this report we structure our findings to be in line with the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016. The Framework sets the strategic direction for fire and rescue. Contained within the current Framework are ten strategic priorities for the SFRS. The consultation draft new Framework has seven priorities for the Service. The final new strategic priorities had not come into force at the time of our inspection. To aid the reader, we have replicated the text of the 2016 strategic priorities in Appendix 1.

3.1_Performance Measures

The Local Fire and Rescue Plan and Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

24. The 2005 Act requires the SFRS to publish a delivery plan for the local authority area. The most recent local Fire and Rescue Plan for Angus was published in 2020.

25. Nationally, the SFRS sets out a planning structure which defines how it expects its strategic aims will be achieved. The SFRS has a Strategic Plan which describes its strategic aims, from which the statutory local Fire and Rescue Plans are derived. The local plans are further developed into local Operating Plans which describe local actions and targets. Ultimately these documents are used to generate Station Plans containing station actions and targets, which in turn can be used to populate the individual personal objectives for the staff based at fire stations.

26. Following the publication in October 2019 of a new national SFRS strategic plan 2019-22, there is a requirement to review local plans. A review was subsequently conducted of the Angus Local Fire and Rescue Plan which led to the production of the 2020 plan.

27. The 2020 Fire and Rescue Plan for Angus includes explanatory and background material for the area, community planning arrangements, and how the SFRS seeks to ensure that its activity complements and supports the locality planning process as described within the Angus Council Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017-30[5]. The overall vision of this partnership plan is: Angus is a great place to live, work, and visit. The priorities within the plan are described as:

   ■ tackling inequalities

   ■ building services around people and communities

   ■ focusing on prevention

   ■ working together effectively

28. The plan outlines the partnership activity and joint work being undertaken to help grow the local economy, improve the quality of life in communities and enhance and protect Angus as a place to live, work and visit.

29. The Angus Fire and Rescue Plan 2020 identifies six local priorities:

   ■ improving fire safety in the home

   ■ improving fire safety and resilience in the business community

   ■ minimising the impact of unintentional harm

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5   Angus Council

- reducing unwanted fire alarm signals
- reducing deliberate fires
- effective risk management and operational preparedness

30. Unlike some other areas we have visited, Angus does not have a single Annual Operating Plan, but instead an individual annual plan for each fire station – we discuss the station plans later in the report.

31. Formal local authority scrutiny of SFRS performance is the responsibility of the Scrutiny and Audit Committee of Angus Council. Due to the impact of Covid, meetings have become virtual for all participants and are recorded for public accessibility. We viewed the recording of a meeting of this committee and listened to the LSO present his report on local area performance for the latest quarter across six key indicators. The Council partners we spoke to felt that the SFRS reports for scrutiny were clear and comprehensive and if asked for further detail on specific issues, the information is always provided, is timely and thorough.

32. Community Councils in Scotland are voluntary organisations run by local residents to act on behalf of the local community. The response rate to our short questionnaire sent to Community Councils in Angus was 4% (one response). In our experience a low return rate is not unusual.

33. The response we received described having no formal relationship with the Service. Previous contact with the Service was related to a local incident. The respondent would welcome more regular contact such as the quarterly provision of information on activity, for example, awareness of any preventative campaigns or other activity being undertaken. This desire for information was further repeated by the local councillors we engaged with.

3.2_Protecting Communities: Risk, Prevention and Response

Safety, Well-Being and Prevention

Prevention and protection

34. There is a Group Commander and one Station Commander responsible for the management of the Prevention and Protection function across the whole LSO area.

Community safety engagement (CSE)

35. The CSE team in Angus comprises one Community Safety Advocate (CSA), line managed by a Watch Commander with the role of Local Area Liaison Officer (LALO).

36. Their role is to reduce fires and work with partners to address other risks within the community, for example road safety, but also extends to areas including youth engagement and support for those within the youth justice setting. This CSE activity involves engaging with partners to identify vulnerable persons. Angus itself does not have access to a partnership analyst; however, the LALO has the ability to access analytical assistance in the design of activity through colleagues based at Dundee. Some examples of work undertaken are:

- work with young persons referred by social work or schools

- activity based on a CSE thematic action plan calendar
- talks to youth groups and other groups on request
- working with Health and Social Care partners
- working with alcohol and drug prevention groups
- working with housing providers
- working with vulnerable persons groups

37. The team describe undertaking a lot of partnership working to address risks to the more vulnerable members of the community. All team members describe having a good relationship with partners.

38. The LALO operates as liaison with Angus Council and, although not co-located with council staff, as we have seen in other areas, does not believe that this is a disadvantage. To ensure continued partnership co-ordination during the pandemic digital communication platforms have been set up between partners which were described as being very successful.

39. The LALO attends a number of multi-agency groups focusing on addressing issues such as anti-social behaviour, hoarding, and adult and child protection. Multi-agency fatal fire case conferences are held in the area with the purpose of identifying learning to inform further prevention activity from these tragic events.

40. Very good relationships are reported between the SFRS and partners including Police Scotland, with the Police Scotland Area Commander reporting, regular, positive and productive meetings. Good links exist locally with SFRS staff and partners within both voluntary and statutory sectors, to identify and intervene with persons identified as at risk. Information sharing between all partners is said to be good.

41. There is clear evidence of referrals of vulnerable persons between the SFRS and partners.

Initiatives

42. There are a number of community and community safety initiatives which have been delivered within the area; the following are some examples of these.

43. Personnel in partnership with the Montrose 'Mandown Project' delivered employability, team building and life skills training to groups.

44. Arbroath, Carnoustie and Kirriemuir fire station personnel participated in the Angus Challenge Poverty Week which was run in conjunction with a number of local partners, including Angus Council social work department.

45. During the pandemic, community walk-rounds, along with Voluntary Action Angus, were undertaken to help identify local area fire risks, particularly secondary fire risk from fly-tipping or refuse within the common areas of flatted dwellings.

46. Personnel have been working with young people who are currently being cared for within the secure campus at the Rossie Charity based in Montrose. The activity seeks to provide life skills, training and development opportunities for young people who are within the custodial system. The training and development is principally through fire and rescue service-related activities, such as pump and ladder drills. Young people are encouraged to develop and enhance their physical and mental capabilities to

enable them to become more responsible, confident, active and safer members of the community.

47. Work has been undertaken with partners to identify cases of hoarding and associated mental health issues in order to provide fire safety advice and support through other agencies.

48. As part of a national SFRS response to the Covid-19 pandemic a number of stations in the Angus area have been participating in initiatives to support local communities. For example, personnel at Carnoustie fire station have established and run a food bank, and other essential personal items, which is based at the fire station in support of those in need within their local community.

49. In conjunction with the local health board and local authority some fire stations in Angus were also facilitating Covid testing centres, where members of the community with symptoms can easily access a test. Personnel have also assisted at vaccination centres.

Deliberate fires

Deliberate fires

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Deliberate fires	103	145	137	132	176
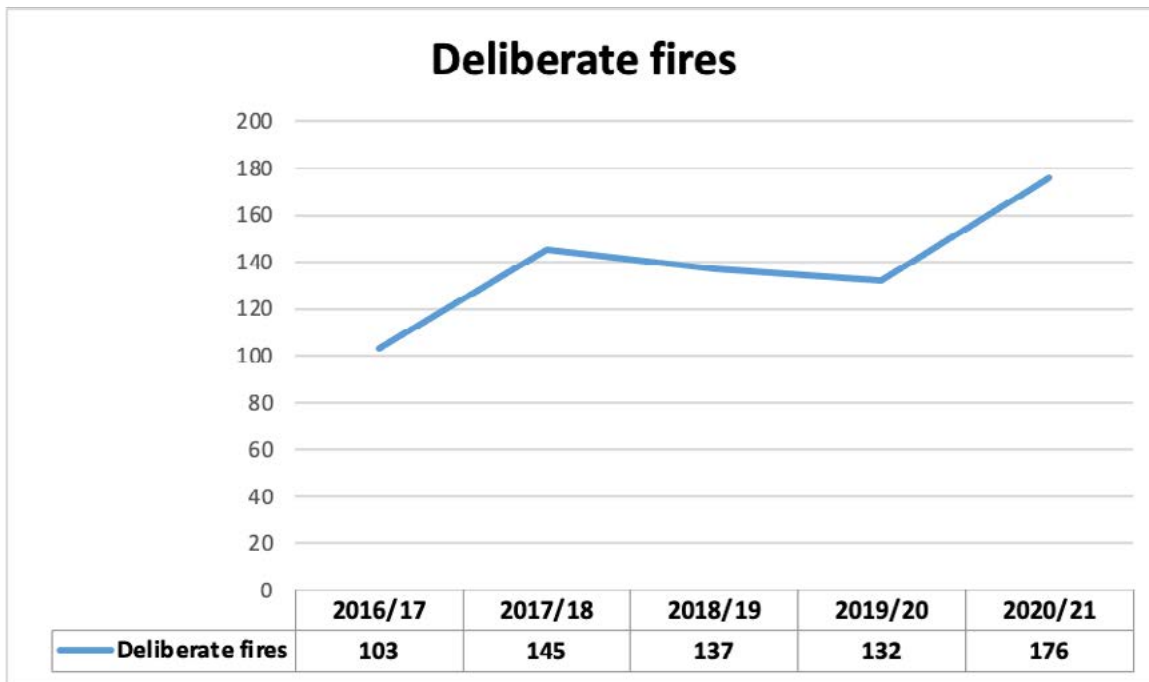
Figure 5: All deliberate fires Angus

50. A significant number of the incidents attended are deliberate fires, which have increased again in number in the last reporting year[6]. The local Fire and Rescue Plan has a reduction in deliberate fire raising as a priority. Additionally there are local thematic action plans, involving a number of partners, for example, for the now-derelict former Strathmartine Hospital site, which has been the location of a large number of fires over an extended number of years. More widely there is targeted youth engagement activity aimed at reducing fire related anti-social behaviour. Figure 5 shows the incidence of all deliberate fires over a five year period

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6   SFRS, *Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics (Scotland)*, - https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/about-us/fire-and-rescue-statistics.aspx

Recommendation

The LSO should ensure the continued focus on work to reduce deliberate fire raising.

Domestic fire safety

51.   Home fire safety visits are an established activity in promoting fire safety. The majority of these visits are undertaken by fire station personnel, with others being carried out by members of the Community Safety Engagement (CSE) team. The percentage of households receiving a home safety visit in 2020/21 was 1.3 and is above the Scottish average of 0.8. The number of visits made in Angus has decreased in the last complete reporting year as shown in Table 3. As also shown in Table 3 there is generally a focus on visits to those classed as high risk. The ability to conduct this type of activity was dramatically impacted by the restrictions put in place because of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the focus, particularly by the CSE team, on providing visits to high-risk and vulnerable persons.

Year	High Risk	Medium Risk	Low Risk	Total[7]
2018/19	754	629	240	**1623**
2019/20	554	553	315	**1422**
2020/21	379	130	41	**550**

Table 3 Home fire safety visits Angus Source: SFRS

52.   In conducting these visits there is an expectation that there will be a focus on households designated as high risk. Station personnel routinely described having an awareness of their local community and in particular those who may be described as vulnerable. As can be seen from the data above more visits have been carried out in premises classed as high risk. The number of HFSVs that can be carried out is influenced by a number of factors, including the constraints on the availability of personnel to conduct the visit.

53.   Of course HFSVs are only a measure of activity rather than outcome. Dwelling fire statistics are shown in Table 4. Although there has been a decrease in accidental dwelling fires, the number of non-fatal casualties in the latest recorded year is proportionality higher than the preceding years.

Dwelling Fires	2018/19	2019/20	2019/20*
Accidental fires	80	79	74
Fatalities	2	0	0
Non-fatal casualties	12	9	19

Table 4 Dwelling fires in Angus[8]

*The statistics for 2020/21 are provisional, and revision typically increases counts by a small proportion.

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7   This data is supplied by the LSO area. The SFRS national statistical publication shows higher totals for each year.

8   SFRS, *Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics (Scotland)*, - https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/about-us/fire-and-rescue-statistics. aspx

Fire safety enforcement (FSE)

54. Fire safety enforcement within Angus is undertaken by one Watch Commander (enforcement officer) who is part of the wider LSO area enforcement team. The LSO area has an enforcement delivery plan 2021/22, which is based on the standard SFRS template, for carrying out fire safety audits in relevant premises. There are mandatory audit elements contained within the standard template and these are reflected in the LSO area plan.

55. Overall the delivery of enforcement activity has been affected by the impact of the pandemic, with the halting of routine audits in the early stages of the restrictions. There is a target minimum of 122 for the achievement of fire safety audits. The enforcement delivery plan sets out that audits will be risk-based, with resources being directed and prioritised around four key areas:

■ Premises where the risk to life is greatest

■ Emerging intelligence e.g. through operational activity or partner communications

■ A risk-based methodology outline by the Directorate

■ Post-fire audit and analysis

56. The SFRS has an emphasis on measuring FSE performance in respect of the number of fire safety audits undertaken. The numbers of fire safety audits completed are shown in table 5

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
119	126	123	59

Table 5 Fire safety audits Angus[9]

57. Of the 59 audits completed in 2020/21, 94.9% were broadly compliant. Premises types that are targeted for audit in the local area delivery plan also follow the guidance issued centrally by the SFRS. Under this centrally issued guidance an annual audit is mandatory for certain premises such as care homes, while other categories of premises receive an annual audit only when risk and compliance level criteria are matched. The nationally reported figure for 2020/21 of audits completed is three audits higher than the 59 audits stated as being completed in the performance data submitted by the LSO as part of the data request for this inspection.

58. Local staff describe their work as being concentrated on sleeping risk premises. But there is a belief amongst staff that the FSE function is under-resourced to meet the needs of the area beyond the audit of high risk premises, and therefore is unable to audit lower risk premises or conduct potential additional work such as thematic audits. Education premises have been the subject of previous thematic audits. The geographical size and rurality of the Angus area are also cited as barriers to achieving the aforementioned national audit targets.

59. As part of our data request for this inspection we asked for a list of recorded relevant premises and were given information from the assessors' list as at September 2020 which reported there were just over 8,000 records in Angus. However some records on that list would not be subject to an audit, such as areas of land, communications masts,

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9   SFRS, *Fire Safety and Organisational Statistics (Scotland)*

advertising boards etc. Lists of known premises can be extracted from the SFRS national Prevention and Protection Enforcement Database (PPED)[10]; however, not all relevant premises are recorded on this database.

60. In common with other areas we have visited, enforcement staff do not have a high opinion of PPED. The system was said to be slow and not accurate in maintaining records. The issues with the system have been reported and where 'fixes' have been implemented the solution only appears short-term. Staff maintain their own records to monitor workflow and maintain confidence in information.

Response and Resilience

Appliances

61. The appliances allocated to the Angus area are of a varying age and are generally being kept in good condition.

Equipment

62. With some exceptions described below, personnel are generally satisfied about the level and quality of operational equipment supplied.

63. Observations were made regarding the poor quality of torches. With crews expressing a preference for the provision of helmet-mounted torches. The Inspectorate is aware that the Service has procured new torches, though we understand they are not helmet-mounted, and that these new torches are being issued. We cannot comment on the type selected as part of the procurement as we are unsighted on the details of the tender.

64. An issue that was raised with us was the perceived poor quality of radios on the incident ground. It is regularly raised in our local area inspections, and often highlighted during incident debriefs, that incident ground communications are reported to be problematic. The Service, in recognition of this, has initiated a project to look at the procurement of new digital fire-ground radios. We understand that some early work on this has been completed. In our local area inspection of Midlothian[11] we recommended that the SFRS should complete its plans to procure a replacement digital radio capability as soon as practical.

65. When defective equipment is sent for repair, there is a perception that the time taken to repair and return is excessive.

66. Periodic testing of equipment is carried out by fire station personnel as part of their normal routine. These tests form an important part of ensuring that the equipment is safe to use, is functioning correctly, and is ready to be deployed at an incident. The SFRS has no single electronic asset management system for equipment and its testing. The process in use in Angus is paper-based. In some fire stations there were very well kept records, in others the information was less well managed. Poor record keeping presents a risk to the organisation should there be an accident involving a piece of equipment and there is an incomplete record during its life cycle.

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10 We identified issues with the premises records on PPED in two of our thematic inspection reports – 'Fire Safety Enforcement' and' Performance Management Information Systems'

11 HM Fire Service Inspectorate, Local Area Inspection Midlothian, May 2021

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Personal protective equipment (PPE)

67. Personnel were broadly happy with the quality and comfort of the PPE provided. There is a national contract for the cleaning and repair of PPE and we were advised that it can sometimes take an extended period of time to get PPE returned after cleaning or repair and occasionally items go missing. This was reported to deter some personnel from having contaminated PPE cleaned more regularly.

Property

68. There is electronic reporting of property issues, with defects being notified to the SFRS's property managers who are then responsible for prioritising and instructing the work to be carried out, and monitoring the performance of the maintenance contractor.

69. The fire stations in the area are mostly in a reasonable state of repair, though some are in need of minor works and decorating. We were however, made aware of a number of defects that had been outstanding for some considerable time or that had poor or ineffective repairs undertaken. We cannot comment directly on the quality of work carried out, or the performance of the maintenance contractor.

70. There are space restrictions at some fire stations, particularly older properties such as Carnoustie, and as a consequence there is unsatisfactory provision of changing; drying; storage; or lecture room facilities in those affected. The SFRS has recently developed station layout standards, depending on station type. Capital and Revenue expenditure priorities on premises refurbishment and repair is a national matter, in consultation with LSO area staff, and is dependent on the availability of funding to undertake work.

71. As we indicate elsewhere in this report, a number of the fire stations, have poor or very poor ICT facilities, either due to poor broadband; Wi-Fi connectivity and/or the number of PCs available for personnel to use. These issues are very frustrating for crews. As we describe elsewhere in this report, a great deal of administrative task recording and learning activity is undertaken using computer-based systems. Slow or ineffective systems are a drain on the efficient use of a finite resource, particularly RVDS staff, time. The SFRS has a published digital strategy 2018-21 which has a vision '*to put SFRS people at the heart of a digital community delivering a safer Scotland*'. We would urge that a future iteration of this strategy build on work already undertaken to make systems more accessible, particularly for the working practices and associated requirements of this duty group.

72. From what we are told by local crews the issue around connectivity is often despite there being fast reliable broadband in the wider local community. In March 2021 the SFRS awarded a new £3 million four-year contract for the provision of its wide area network requirements, delivering connectivity across all SFRS sites, replacing an existing contract. The supplier was expected to complete the installation requirements by December 2021. Announcing the award of the contract it was said that this will be one of the largest SD-WAN deployments in the UK. It was also stated that the SFRS had stipulated that the user experience was a priority, especially at some of the more remote locations where providing service is more challenging. It is to be hoped that this will become a reality, as currently at some locations, systems are so poor that personnel find the use of ICT extremely frustrating. We look forward to seeing a positive impact from the implementation of this contract as we continue to monitor end user satisfaction levels during our future station visits, particularly in remote locations.

73. Occasionally, though more frequently in some roles, there is a need for staff to scan documents, such as building plans, and upload these to corporate systems. An outcome from a national contract for the provision of station equipment, has been the removal of printers, which also had a scanning capability, and their replacement with printer only devices. We have mentioned this issue before in other reports. Although relating to, what may be viewed by some as, a minor issue, highlights to us a disconnect between the end users and those tasked with specifying and procuring new equipment. This observation is applicable, in our experience, across a number of areas, be it equipment or systems based changes.

Operational intelligence

74. The SFRS has a statutory duty to obtain information which may be required by its personnel in carrying out their operational role. When information is created, either by collection as part of that duty or through the writing of an operational policy, such as a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for an incident type, it is made available to firefighters through a demountable device within the cab of the fire appliance.

75. In April 2018 the SFRS introduced a national Operational Intelligence (OI) system. Separately, the provision of risk information was subject to a thematic inspection[12] by HMFSI. In our report we describe in detail the policies and process used for managing the collection and use of data, and the software and hardware used in the system.

76. As part of our data request for this inspection we asked for the number of local premises for which SFRS now holds records and were advised that details are kept for 200 locations. The list is dynamic as new records are created and existing records deleted. As could be expected, records of premises are predominantly concentrated in the larger towns in Angus.

77. The system uses a demountable tablet computer device. Prior to the system going live in 2018, firefighters in Angus used the legacy Tayside FRS system and the mobile data terminal (MDT) permanently installed in the appliance cab. The new device is designed to automatically receive information updates via a Wi-Fi connection. We were advised of problems relating to the tablet updating at a number of fire stations. Currently there is a national upgrade programme for Wi-Fi across the Service, which hopefully will resolve any issue. Additionally we understand that a software problem has been identified on the tablet which was separately affecting its ability to update. Under normal circumstances where a tablet fails to update automatically it can usually be done manually. We are advised that the Service are in the process of resolving the software issue. We are also aware that a defect has arisen with the battery in some of these devices within the area. Until replacement batteries are fitted to those devices affected, they must remain installed in the charging cradle on the appliance.

78. The legacy Tayside system, in addition to premises information, also contained information related to motor vehicle safety systems and chemical hazard data. This type of information is used when responding to incidents involving vehicles or chemicals. The new system does not hold this type of information and was an issue raised with us during our station visits. This current shortcoming was highlighted by us in our thematic inspection. At the time of our thematic inspection there were plans to add further data sets to the system, but at present this has not been achieved for this type of information.

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12   HM Fire Service Inspectorate, *The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's arrangements for the provision of Operational Risk Information*, 2019

79. As part of our local area inspection we wanted to see how the new system was being used and the local processes for managing site specific data collection. As we ascertained in our thematic inspection, for the Wholetime station one watch has the responsibility of allocating the premises across the other watches to conduct visits. For the RVDS stations the relevant RVDS Support Watch Commander is taking on responsibility for the collection and updating of the system assisted by RDS personnel where possible.

80. Training in the use of the system is via an online package as part of the SFRS's Learning Content Management System (LCMS). We sampled some risk information for premises, to review the ease with which staff could retrieve the information and how familiar they were with the tablet device. In our sample we found good levels of skill amongst fire station-based staff on the use of the system.

Health and safety

81. Until October 2020 health and safety reporting in the SFRS was normally carried out using the RIVO Safeguard system. Generally, the system was considered to be awkward to use by staff who thought this was a factor contributing to a low reporting of near-misses. In October 2020 the Service introduced a new electronic recording system called TASS (Think Act Stay Safe). There have been a number of technical ICT issues with the development of the system and although its use has commenced there are some outstanding issues with it, which the Service hopes will be resolved shortly. Knowledge and use of TASS by station-based personnel was limited due to the lack of health and safety events required to be recorded.

82. Near-misses are the type of events that occur on the incident ground as well as on-station, there was some evidence of reporting near-misses, seven over the last three years. Near-miss reporting is described by the Health and Safety Executive as a very important way of identifying problem areas.

83. At a UK level the SFRS benchmarks well in relation to injury rates per 1,000 employees against other fire and rescue services. For Angus there has been a decrease in the number of health and safety events that have resulted in injury over the last three years, 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2021; from 2 to 1[13].

84. During the same reporting period there were five accidents involving fire service vehicles. It is pleasing to note that there have been no recorded acts of violence over the past three years.

85. We indicated in the introduction to this report that the SFRS has a programme of internal station audits. These audits are carried out as part of the SFRS's operational assurance policy. The station audits form part of the pre-incident audit arrangements of this policy. The SFRS has a central team whose focus is on all aspects of Operational Assurance, including audits, which can be either routine or thematic, concentrating on a particular subject area. Within the LSO area managers carry out station audits annually, which is more frequently than is required by the operational assurance policy, which defines that station audits are carried out at the following frequency;

- Wholetime fire stations at least once per year
- RDS fire stations at least once every two years
- VDS fire stations at the discretion of the LSO

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13   LSO data return

86. We reviewed the content of a limited sample of routine audit reports for the stations we visited. The reports were completed to a varying degree of quality. A limited number omitted narrative to support the grading given and detail of areas of notable practice or areas for improvement, for the remaining reports these sections were completed, some to a reasonable standard. The standard audit forms include a section to be completed which sets out an action plan, including timescales, for the station management team. At present the governance of these action plans is left to local managers. We feel that progress reports against these plans should be reported on at regular LSO management team meetings.

Partnership

87. Partnership working encompasses formal partnerships, stemming from Community Planning arrangements as defined in legislation, and informal partnerships at an operational level. All partners, both voluntary and statutory, interviewed by us had a very high opinion of the SFRS's contribution to partnership working, with a view that the officers of the Service were an intrinsic part of community planning, with a clear willingness to be involved. It was noted that the SFRS was not able to contribute financially to the partnership but compensated with the provision of staff and office space resources. The overall relationship with the local authority is said to be strong with a focus on areas of deprivation, targeting initiatives around poverty and child poverty.

88. At a formal level the full Community Planning Partnership (CPP) is responsible for the overall development of the Community Plan and Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (ALOIP), currently ALOIP 2017-30. The partnership has a Board which has responsibility for governance and leadership, and an executive group which scrutinises and manages performance of the community plan and locality plans and coordinates and aligns resources. The LSO is an active member of the CPP Board and the Group Commander with oversight for Angus chaired the executive group. During the pandemic the two groups became one entity, chaired by the Group Commander. This arrangement will continue and the role of chair has now been passed on. Partners praised the SFRS's contribution to the organisation of the CPP governance structures and its provision of a risk register system and templates. The SFRS is also reported to provide useful data to the CPP to assist in the design, implementation and review of strategy and policy.

89. Under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 Local Authorities are required to develop locality plans for places where people experience inequalities. For community planning purposes the area is divided into four locality planning groups: Arbroath; Brechin/Montrose; Carnoustie/Monifieth/Sidlaw; Forfar/Kirriemuir. Membership of these groups come from a variety of sectors; Private, Public and Third Sector.

90. Additionally, local managers participate in the statutory resilience partnership activity. The Group Commander with oversight for Angus participates in a monthly Local Resilience Partnership (LRP) meeting and chairs the LRP sub-group 'Care for People'. The SFRS participate in other LRP sub-groups. We were also informed of a rescue sub-group that includes the SFRS and partners from RNLI, Coastguard, Police Scotland and Mountain Rescue who liaise regularly to improve local outcomes. Partners within the LRP described a long-standing positive relationship with the fire and rescue service.

91. Operationally, at a fire station level good partnership arrangements were described between all partner agencies. There was an increased desire to get involved in non-fire-related areas such as child poverty, provision of food parcels during Covid-19 and period poverty initiatives. Partnership Vulnerable Person (VP) referrals work well in the area with

good cooperation reported between partners. We were told that the SFRS is seen as an honest broker of help and support and can often access areas and/or people that Police and Social Work colleagues find difficult. Partners also report good access to, and use of, community fire stations in the area.

3.3_Evolving Role of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Service Transformation

92. Issues around transformation of the role of the SFRS are a consideration for firefighters. The perceived lack of information and uncertainty on future plans for the Service is unsettling for some staff. This is a situation that has persisted for some time and is the result of lengthy discussions, at a national and UK level, regarding terms and conditions and the role map of a firefighter. There are also delays in finalising the national terms and conditions of RVDS firefighters within Scotland. These delays are a source of frustration amongst those affected.

93. Fire station personnel are well sighted on the potential training that would accompany any expansion of role, given that completing training for their existing role is seen as difficult (due to factors described elsewhere in this report). This is particularly a challenge for RVDS firefighters, most of whom have a short, finite opportunity for training, but it also extends to some Wholetime personnel. Broadly speaking, the majority of staff we spoke to were supportive of a change in role, particularly around emergency medical response, if the role is accompanied with training and the necessary equipment and there are clearly defined boundaries of operation.

94. Overall, the Service has an ambitious transformation programme which it believes is essential to meet the ever-changing risks faced and demands placed on it. In June 2019, the Service created a Service Delivery Model Programme Framework which comprises of a number of independent and interrelated projects that will contribute to delivering the vision and the proposed long-term benefits of transformation. The programme, which itself is too complex to discuss in detail in this report, initially contained a RVDS Strategy project, which has further evolved into what is now the Strategic On-Call Improvement Programme. The declared purpose of this programme is to maximise the use and associated benefits of on-call firefighters, ensuring the provision of an appropriate balance of prevention and protection and emergency response services to communities across Scotland. The work of the programme is ongoing and being undertaken in three phases; the research work which is Phase One has concluded. Phase Two will identify and create a programme of improvement strategies and was expected to conclude in quarter four of 2020/21. This timeline has been reviewed and, due to the impact of Covid-19 and a change in the phasing of public consultations within the project, has an updated completion date of July 2023 with the final phase scheduled to complete in 2026. However, as indicated there are a number of interdependent elements and these timescales may slip further. The SFRS has project and programme management processes in place to monitor and report on progress.

95. The Phase One research was aimed at the following areas:

   ■ The current RVDS arrangements within the SFRS
   ■ The overall direction of the research with regard to:
      ■ improved attraction

- improved recruitment and selection
- enhanced retention
- appropriate response models
- framework for station duties
- enhanced engagement

96.   It is hoped that the outputs from this initial work will help to address some of the issues identified within this report. To help drive this work forward a new national team, supporting improvements to the attraction, recruitment, retention and working practices of RVDS staff has been created. There is a general awareness of the project amongst Angus RVDS staff, one of the area's RDS Watch Commanders is part of the RVDS national project team in his dual-contract role.

Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

97.   The SFRS Performance Management Framework (PMF) 2021 commits the Service to respond appropriately to UFAS calls but, unlike the 2020 version, does not set a target for the reduction of these calls. The local fire and rescue plan has a reduction of UFAS calls as a priority, performance management forms part of the scrutiny reports to Angus Council, within which there is a target to report against. Table 6 shows that UFAS calls have been decreasing over the last three years.

Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
UFAS calls	369	361	270

Table 6 UFAS calls Angus[14]

98.   Analysis from the scrutiny reports in 2020/21 mentioned above indicates that the premises types that had persistent UFAS calls were primarily in the residential care; sheltered housing; education and medical sectors. These sources of UFAS calls are similar to other LSO areas. Over the last three years false alarms due to apparatus were the main category of UFAS incidents, accounting for 79.9% of fire false alarm actuations in 2020/21.

99.   Overall the number of UFAS incidents represented 18.1% of the total operational activity across Angus over the period 2020/21 with the consequential negative impact on being able to carry out other activities, such as training or community safety work, combined with the unnecessary road risk whilst responding under blue light conditions. In an area with a large number of RDS-crewed appliances the disruption caused to crews and potentially their primary employers should not go unrecognised too.

100.   From 6 May 2020 the Service nationally introduced a new UFAS model response policy in an attempt to minimise disruption to emergency response during the Covid-19 pandemic. This new policy reduced the pre-determined attendance (PDA) response at automatic fire alarm (AFA) actuations to a single pumping appliance, with the exception of sleeping accommodation and other specific high-risk premises, which continued to receive either a full or appropriately modified PDA.

101.   Within the Service, the Prevention & Protection (P&P) function committed to conduct a UFAS Stocktake Review – a detailed examination of the effectiveness of SFRS's UFAS

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14   Supplied by LSO in response to information request

Integrity, Objectivity, and Fairness.

arrangements. The Stocktake Review was conducted by the UFAS Working Group – a cross-directorate group. The Working Group's report generated 20 recommendations. At a meeting of the Service Delivery Committee of the SFRS Board on 17 September 2020, a report was brought forward outlining the SFRS's approach for managing the implementation of the UFAS Stocktake Review recommendations. This national work resulted in the publication of proposed options which were the subject of a 12-week public consultation which ran from 19 July to 11 October 2021. Following an analysis of the responses to the consultation the SFRS Board approved Option A of the consultation at its meeting in December 2021, the main points of which are:

- Call challenge all AFAs from non-domestic premises, unless exempt

- No response mobilised, if questioning confirms there is no fire, or signs of fire

- Automatic exemption applied to hospitals, a PDA of two appliances regardless time of day, subject to periodic review

- Sleeping risk premises are exempt from call challenging and will receive the following immediate response:

  - residential care homes a PDA of two fire appliances regardless time of day.

  - all other sleeping risks a PDA of one fire appliance between 07:00 and 18:00 and two fire appliances outwith these hours.

- Implementation of these measures is postponed until April 2023. The Covid-19 interim response model mentioned earlier will remain in place until then.

102. The Fire Safety Enforcement Officer (FSEO) in Angus engages with dutyholders during the fire safety audit process to offer advice on reducing unwanted alarm actuations, including the consideration of implementing cost effective technical solutions. Where there are agreed UFAS reduction plans with dutyholders, continued engagement is undertaken to ensure plans are being implemented and are regularly reviewed for effectiveness.

103. Previously in the area, local engagement activity has been carried out with the health sector, which has historically been a source of unwanted alarms.

3.4_Governance, Accountability and Performance

Effective Governance and Performance

Local scrutiny arrangements

104. As mentioned earlier, reporting of performance is made to the local authority as part of the local scrutiny arrangements. There are eight wards within Angus. As described previously for community planning purposes the area is also divided into four Area Community Planning Groups. Each area has a localised delivery plan.

105. From our discussions with elected members, including the Chair of Angus Council's scrutiny committee, and the Council Chief Executive, we concluded that officers of the Service are actively engaged with the Council and Community Planning Partnership. The SFRS is well engaged with strategic partners and is playing an integral part in the delivery of partnership aims beyond traditional community safety initiatives, such as food banks.

106. It is a SFRS objective to use Fire Station Plans to demonstrate how the aims of the organisation are delivered locally through relevant actions and targets. Although brief and

generic in nature, there is a degree of localisation to the Angus station plans referencing local partnership working when relevant.

People

107. Nationally the Service recognises that the RVDS is an integral and vital part of the SFRS's operational response. As highlighted previously, the Service has created a Service Delivery Model Programme Framework; the work related to this is ongoing and contains within it a RVDS Strategy project. The declared purpose of this RVDS Strategy project is to maximise the use and associated benefits of on-call firefighters, ensuring the provision of an appropriate balance of prevention and protection and emergency response services to communities across Scotland.

108. The RVDS project will seek to create an overarching strategy to identify other initiatives and improvements that can be implemented to further support and strengthen the Retained and Volunteer duty systems. It is anticipated that the focus will be on, but not limited to, recruitment, retention, response models, station duties and enhanced engagement.

109. One fairly recent change aimed at improving this section of the Service has been the creation of the role of a RVDS Support Watch Commander. In January 2019, the SFRS appointed 18 staff to these posts to act as support officer for RDS and VDS fire stations. There have been two further appointment rounds to take the number of posts to fifty-four. There are four of these posts in the LSO area, two of which have responsibility for Angus fire stations. One of these Angus officers also has responsibility for a number of stations in another LSO area which raises challenges in the ability to devote time to the Angus stations. A focus for the RVDS Support Watch Commanders is assisting with RVDS recruitment and training. However there are limitations on the training assistance which they are able to provide due to a lack of availability of instructor training courses for these officers.

110. We see the introduction of the RVDS Support Watch Commanders as a welcome positive step. Given the relative importance of RDS and Volunteer firefighters, crewing almost 80% of SFRS fire stations, we continue to support efforts to create duty systems that can flexibly recognise the important role played by these firefighters in providing a service to their communities, while recognising that what will be a good solution for one community might not be appropriate for another.

111. The issues surrounding the RVDS are complex and connected to wider problems such as recruitment, retention and training, which have a link to crewing and availability. Some Angus fire stations have current vacancies. Angus has a high number of dual contract firefighters, Wholetime firefighters who also have a retained firefighter contract.

Appliance availability

112. RDS Personnel within the Angus area use an electronic system to manage their availability, which is a different system to most other areas of Scotland. Personnel we spoke to believed that they were disadvantaged by having to use a different system, due to the way in which their system records an individual's contractual commitment, compared to the alternate system. There will be a move to Gartan, the main recording system in use, as part of the SFRS's Command and Control Mobilising System (CCMS) project. However, the date of that transition is uncertain due to delays in the completion of the CCMS project.

Integrity, Objectivity, and Fairness.

113. Both systems, the one in use and Gartan, allow staff to 'book' available or unavailable remotely, using a mobile phone. The system allows managers and Operations Control at Dundee to monitor the availability of appliances. The availability of the RDS-crewed pumps are shown in Table 7. Some of the more usual issues influencing the low availability rate of some pumps are discussed elsewhere in this report.

Fire station	Availability %
Arbroath	82
Brechin 1st appliance Brechin 2nd appliance	97 65
Carnoustie	72
Forfar 1st appliance Forfar 2nd appliance Forfar 3rd appliance	99 97 69
Kirriemuir 1st appliance Kirriemuir 2nd appliance	95 60
Montrose 1st appliance Montrose 2nd appliance	99 76

Table 7 RDS appliance availability October 2020 - September 2021

114. Availability at some stations has been impacted by a shortage of crew, often during the daytime. This is reflective of a general trend where people work away from their home town during the day. Some fire stations have vacancies for a number of personnel. Recruitment was paused at the start of the pandemic and later recommenced. For RDS personnel only, there was a belief amongst staff that the recruitment process needs to be improved. At a limited number of stations, due to the lack of space, the size of the premises is a barrier to recruiting more staff.

115. We have raised the difficulties that are experienced with the recruitment of, and initial entry process for, RDS in a number of reports, most recently in our thematic inspection on 'The Training of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's Retained Duty System Personnel'[15]. Locally the recruitment system and process is perceived to be too restrictive, too lengthy, and not suited to the needs of rural communities. As mentioned elsewhere in this report the Service has a RVDS project and one of the strands of that work is a review of the recruitment process.

Appraisal

116. We saw very limited evidence that personal appraisals are carried out for operational personnel. Where we did see them the overall quality was good with some Watch Commanders placing more importance on the process and quality of the end product than others.

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15 The Training of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's Retained Duty System Personnel (www.gov.scot)

Learning and development

117. The area, unlike others we have inspected, doesn't have an Annual Local Area Training Plan to identify training needs, plan and direct the capacity of the local training team.

> **Recommendation**
>
> The LSO should produce an Annual Training Plan to ensure that there is an appropriate assessment of resources that are required to adequately address the area's training needs, and to ensure a training focus on local risks is included.

118. The SFRS has a standard training programme for firefighters for general maintenance of skills and knowledge. It is designed to be a blended approach of lecture or self-directed study, and practical 'hands-on' experiential learning. The programme comprises TfOC (training for operational competence) modules. There are 12 core modules, 12 standard modules, and 24 advanced modules. These modules apply to Wholetime and RDS firefighters.

119. Due to competing demands on the time available to RDS firefighters and the finite time for their training, TfOC modules are applied to RDS firefighters in the following way:

   ■ all 12 core TfOC modules should be covered annually

   ■ all standard TfOC modules should be covered over a rolling 3-year period

   ■ advanced TfOC modules that are relative to risks in their area should be covered on a 3-year rolling programme. The decision on what advanced modules to cover should be made by the LSO on the basis of risk

120. The SFRS submitted training schedules as evidence for our inspection. The schedule includes:

   ■ all core TfOC modules over 12 months

   ■ all standard TfOC modules over 3-years (plus an equality and diversity module)

   ■ RDS stations have been allocated 9 advanced modules, additionally specific RDS stations have the advanced modules of marine, and petrochemicals relevant to the local need

121. Part of this blended approach is delivered using the Learning Content Management System (LCMS) which is an online learning resource for firefighters. The system contains multi-media learning modules covering the skills based on the Maintenance Phase Development Planner (MPDP). The MPDP is a monthly programme but it doesn't fit with the Wholetime shift cycle. Each subject has a series of e-learning tools, case studies, interactive packages, and assessments to support learning. Some personnel were of the view that some of the LCMS modules were too long and concluding assessments were of poor quality, and didn't support learning.

122. Although specifically focusing on RDS firefighter training, we published in March 2020[16] a report which included an assessment of the elements of the MPDP. We concluded that the modules have been created by subject matter experts and provide a great deal of background information. This can make them overly complex and very text-heavy with content not always easy to understand. The content can prove very difficult to digest and even more difficult to recall when taking the online test at the end of the session.

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16   ibid

123. Evidence of this training is normally recorded using the PDRPro system. PDRPro is an electronic system used by Wholetime and RDS firefighters to record training and learning development, both from formal training and from continuous development obtained during incidents. Due to lack of ICT facilities at fire stations, where there are a limited number of computers for the use of the whole crew, keeping records updated is challenging. Performance monitoring of the completion of training records is the responsibility of the relevant fire station management team.

124. During our visits, we discussed with personnel their overall view of the training. The majority believed that there was too much of a focus on theory, on completing training records, and insufficient basic 'hands-on' practical training. This accords with what we are told in other local areas. We are advised that following an internal review of the SFRS training function and the publication of the findings of our thematic inspection mentioned above, a new TfOC framework will be implemented from 1 April 2022. As a result, one of the main changes will be more focus on core skills and a move towards more hands-on training. The theory based training modules will become maintenance of skills modules containing need to know, risk critical information. The maintenance modules will be shorter in duration compared to the current PowerPoint based acquisition modules and contain more video and interactive content. Personnel also identified that the major risk locally was the harbour areas at Montrose and Arbroath and they felt a need for additional training in marine firefighting. We are subsequently advised that this training is now planned, following which there will be a request to declare Arbroath as a marine firefighting resource.

125. Training is supported by area-based trainers whose priorities and activity is led through discussion with station Watch Commanders. Some stations were very positive in their view of these training officer visits. Others felt that the support from trainers was historically better. There was also the desire to have the ability to use the SDA training facilities at Portlethen, which is geographically closer to some Angus stations than the Perth training centre currently being used.

126. Effective use of LCMS and PDRPro systems relies on a suitable ICT infrastructure, both in provision of computers and adequate broadband connections, particularly when trying to stream training videos. As we have covered elsewhere in this report, there are issues at a number of fire stations that have insufficient numbers of fully functioning computers and good broadband speeds.

127. Similar to other areas of the Service there is a shortage of trained drivers at a number of fire stations in Angus. There was also said to be a lack of available driver training courses, although at the time of inspection this was said to be improving. The Service is well aware of the driver training issues and has nationally tried to resolve the problems by outsourcing some of the provision. In addition to outsourcing, the Service is generally looking to increase the number of driving instructors available, hopefully this may help resolve some of the issues. Though as may be expected, the time taken to qualify as an instructor or an appliance driver is lengthy.

128. An issue raised consistently was the negative impact on training created by a lack of modern scrap cars to train on, particularly hybrid or electric vehicles. Crews also commented on the annual allocation of one scrap vehicle per watch or station not being sufficient.

LSO support staff

129. The Angus area is supported by a team of support staff who have a shared remit including the LSO area and support to the North SDA, with work fluctuating due to need and priority.

130. A national review of admin support has been carried out with a view to disseminate good practice across the Service of the support provided. A positive development has been the creation of a 'landing page' on the North SDA SharePoint site. This provides easy access to the necessary forms and systems required by fire station staff to manage routine administrative functions, such as recording sickness or processing purchase orders. This single access portal is particularly useful to those who are newly promoted or acting up in a role and have no previous experience in using these systems. Relevant staff are provided an email link to the 'landing page'.

131. There is a good relationship with the RVDS Support Watch Commanders and other uniformed staff, contact, by phone and email, was said to have increased during the pandemic. It was recognised that communication with other station-based personnel could be improved. Similar to their operational colleagues, admin support in Angus experience challenges from some national issues such as ICT software and systems, especially lack of compatibility between systems.

Workforce

132. The management structure for the wider LSO area comprises one LSO, four Group Commanders, and eight Station Commanders. Specifically for Angus, in addition to the LSO, there is one Group Commander and two Station Commanders who cover Angus stations (one of the Station Commanders also has responsibility for Prevention and Protection). The Angus area is also supported by the shared resources of the Prevention and Protection Group Commander and a Station Commander responsible for training across the LSO area.

133. The majority of personnel we spoke to were positive of the station management in the area and felt able to raise issues or ask for advice if necessary. Although visits to stations had been impacted by the restrictions brought in due to Covid-19, it was said to be always possible to contact managers.

134. The biggest challenge in recent years for RDS crews at some fire stations has been, and continues to be, the availability of crew. This has been primarily down to staff leaving the Service and the time taken in the recruitment of replacements. Some stations also have a number of trainee firefighters who require additional support. Following initial training, it takes a period of time, usually three years, for a trainee to become designated as 'competent' in the role. During this three-year period the trainee firefighters are unable to fully contribute to the crewing of the appliance because the SFRS's policies and procedure require certain functions to be carried out by fully competent personnel only.

135. RDS firefighters often have a principal employer and in some cases have their employer's agreement to leave their place of principal employment to respond to a call, thereby supporting safety in the local community. Employer release can be an important factor for daytime RDS cover.

136. Angus operational staff sickness absence percentage and average days lost per person are shown in Tables 8, 9 and 10. As can be seen the rate has generally been increasing.

Year	Average Days Lost Per Person	Absence %
2017/18	2.2	1.77
2018/19	11.8	7.79
2019/20	7.68	6.92

Table 8 Angus Wholetime staff sickness absence statistics

Year	Average Days Lost Per Person	Absence %
2017/18	7.1	2.18
2018/19	7.41	2.08
2019/20	8.1	2.32

Table 9 Angus RDS staff sickness absence statistics

Year	Average Days Lost Per Person	Absence %
2017/18	Nil	Nil
2018/19	Nil	Nil
2019/20	Nil	Nil

Table 10 Angus Flexi Duty Staff

Climate Change

137. With Glasgow having hosted the COP26 climate change conference in November 2021, climate change has had a recently increased profile. However, changes to the climate in Scotland has been in evidence over a number of recent years, with warmer wetter winters and longer periods of dry weather at other times of the year. The impact of this for the SFRS is twofold. Firstly, as an emergency service the SFRS provides a response to incidents of both wildfire and flooding, and increases in these incident types requires the Service to adapt, for example: increasing the amount and disposition of flood rescue equipment and boats; and the provision of enhanced or specialised wildfire equipment. Secondly, the SFRS is a key player in the Scottish Government's Climate Change Adaptation Programme. As part of this climate change work the SFRS has published a Climate Change Response Plan 2045[17].

138. The plan outlines how the Service intends to respond to the Scottish Government's declared Climate Emergency. Part of the SFRS's response, is to reduce its own carbon emissions to a net zero target by 2045. In an attempt to achieve this the SFRS aims to move its light fleet and vans to electric vehicles. Some officers working in the area use the SFRS electric vehicles. A consequence of this is the need for greater access to vehicle charging points. In addition to the changes to fleet the Service has a policy of trying to reduce the energy consumption at fire stations. Arbroath fire station, took part in the SFRS's carbon reduction championships and finished fifth with work being done around heating control and lighting.

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17   climatechangeresponseplan2045.pdf (firescotland.gov.uk)

3.5_Conclusions and recommendations

Our impression of the Angus area is predominantly positive about the commitment and quality of the SFRS staff there. The overall geography of the area presents the Service and its personnel with some challenges.

There are very strong local partnerships. SFRS staff and managers are seen as very active members and contributing to partnership aims, at a formal and informal level, and by local communities.

The 2005 Act requires that the SFRS must have regard to this report and, having done so, must take such measures (if any) as it thinks fit in relation to the report. We are therefore confident that where we express a view on particular issues, the LSO will consider what we have said and will take it into account in forward planning.

We have identified a small number of issues during the inspection. In order to assist the LSO in improving performance, we have included recommendations in the body of the report for the LSO to explore further. We list these recommendations below for ease of reading.

List of Recommendations
- The LSO should ensure the continued focus on work to reduce deliberate fire raising.
- The LSO should produce an Annual Training Plan to ensure that there is an appropriate assessment of resources that are required to adequately address the area's training needs, and to ensure a training focus on local risks is included.

Glossary and abbreviations

AFA	Automatic fire alarm
CCMS	Command and control mobilising system
CFF	Community Firefighter
CPP	Community Planning Partnership
CSA	Community Safety Advocate
CSE	Community safety engagement
DACO	Deputy Assistant Chief Officer
Dual crewed	An arrangement where more than one fire appliance is crewed by the same crew
FSE	Fire safety enforcement
HFSV	Home fire safety visit
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LALO	Local Area Liaison Officer
LCMS	Learning content management system: an online learning resource for firefighters
LOIP	Local outcomes improvement plan
LSO	Local Senior Officer: by law the SFRS has to appoint an LSO for each local authority area in Scotland
MPDP	Maintenance phase development planner
PDA	Pre-determined attendance
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PPED	Prevention and protection enforcement database
RDS	Retained duty system
Relevant premises	Non-domestic premises to which fire safety law applies
RVDS	Retained and Volunteer duty system
SDA	Service Delivery Area. The SFRS is organised into three SDAs, North, East and West
SFRS	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
TASS	Think Act Stay Safe
TED	Training and Employee Development
TfOC	Training for operational competence
UFAS	A false alarm incident in non-domestic premises where the SFRS is called out as a consequence of a fire alarm operating
2005 Act	Fire (Scotland) Act 2005

Appendix 1
The strategic priorities in the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016

Performance Measures

1. The SFRS must, in discussion with the Scottish Government, specify appropriate performance measures to support its Strategic Plan, for the delivery of outcomes relating to the strategic priorities and objectives set out in this Framework.

Safety, Well-Being and Prevention

2. The SFRS should fully contribute to improving the safety and well-being of Scotland's communities and must continue to build on the successful focus on prevention. It should ensure that there is a clear process for working with partners to identify the risks faced by communities and individuals so that the SFRS can target activity on a risk-based approach and where it can most effectively improve safety and contribute to addressing inequalities within and between communities.

Response and Resilience

3. The SFRS should work with other public sector partners to evolve a holistic and dynamic process of identification, evaluation and assessment of community risk and Best Value in order to prioritise and target its use of resources to ensure an appropriate response to incidents across Scotland and support improved outcomes for communities. As part of this approach, the SFRS should promote optimal command, control, communication and tri-service co-operation in response to incidents.

4. The SFRS should support effective multi-agency emergency planning and response arrangements including contributing fully to the work of Regional and Local Resilience Partnerships in assessing risk; and preparing, planning for, responding to and recovering from major and catastrophic incidents and threats. When working with other responders, the SFRS should play a key role in building community resilience and protecting both Scottish and UK critical infrastructure assets.

Partnership

5. Community planning and partnership working with other services and communities should be embedded throughout the SFRS. Building on its existing Engagement Strategy, the SFRS should proactively seek collaborative opportunities and innovative ways of working in partnership with other blue light services/key stakeholders to improve outcomes for communities and should ensure effective stakeholder engagement in its approach to all its work including partnership working.

Service Transformation

6. The SFRS should continue to ensure that the benefits of Fire Reform are fully realised, evidenced and tracked, and it should explore through Service redesign new and innovative ways in which it can improve the safety and well-being of communities throughout Scotland by building on the traditional roles carried out by the Service.

Integrity, Objectivity, and Fairness.

Modernising Response

7. The SFRS should develop and implement dynamic, innovative and sustainable operating systems throughout Scotland which are fit for purpose and meet local needs (covering both the Retained Duty System and Wholetime Firefighter work patterns).

Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

8. SFRS should develop a new approach to reducing unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS) demand and road risk. This approach should involve the SFRS Board setting stretching targets to support the Service's Strategic Plan in relation to this priority.

Effective Governance and Performance

9. The SFRS should ensure it has an effective approach to performance management to support robust scrutiny of the Service at national and local levels. This approach should be regularly reviewed and evaluated in pursuit of continuous improvement. The SFRS should also collect, produce and analyse data and other intelligence to promote the safety and well-being of communities, support operational efficiency and performance improvements (including its partnership contributions), and enable effective public reporting of performance.

People

10. The SFRS should aim to be an employer of choice – maximising the effectiveness of its approach to workforce planning; promoting the safety, health and well-being of all staff; and being a learning organisation with opportunities for all. The SFRS should also seek to be an organisation that is more representative of the people and communities of Scotland that it serves.