



HM Fire Service Inspectorate

Local Area Inspection City of Edinburgh



Integrity, Objectivity, and Fairness.

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All the members of the inspection team contributed to the development of this report and the quality assurance reviewer provided a professional challenge to the contents, assumptions and conclusions made. However, the Chief Inspector takes sole responsibility for the report, its contents and conclusions.

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1_The local area inspection programme

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 May 2019) to include 2019/20 corporate indicators.

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 reports to the Head of Service Delivery for the relevant SFRS Service Delivery Area (SDA) (North, East or West). 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.

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.

The findings in our report follow the structure of the Framework. In following the structure of the Framework, there will 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. But there may be occasions when it will be appropriate to repeat our observations against more than one priority.

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 work.



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 non-uniformed 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.

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: we intend that it should be a proportionate activity that provides an overview of the area, comparable with other local area inspections that we carry out. The SFRS has a programme of internal station audits that involve a detailed look at fire station activity and records, and we do not want to duplicate that work, although we do take these into consideration within our inspection.

During our inspection of the City of Edinburgh we visited every fire station in the area, speaking to the on duty wholetime personnel and the single retained duty system (RDS) crew on their training night.

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

- Prevention and protection
- Service delivery
- Training and employee development
- Health and safety
- Fire station supervision

We interviewed community safety staff, support staff and trade union representatives.

We met with senior representatives of the City of Edinburgh Council and Police Scotland.

To gauge service users' opinion of the SFRS, we contacted the 44 Community Councils within the City of Edinburgh. 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, and asked about views of service quality and suggested areas for improvement. We received two responses.

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. The fieldwork for this local area inspection was carried out in January and February 2020. The SFRS is continuing to change and evolve, consequently material changes may have occurred since then.

2_ About the area



Figure 1: Scottish council area boundaries

The City of Edinburgh is the area numbered 12 on the map in Figure 1. It covers an area of around 264 km². It has a border with the local authority areas of East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian. In terms of the SFRS organisation structure, the City of Edinburgh is within the East SDA.

The City of Edinburgh is split into 17 council wards.

The population of the City of Edinburgh at the end of June 2018 was 518,500¹ making it the 2nd highest populated of the 32 local authority areas in Scotland. Around 9.5% of the Scottish population reside in the City of Edinburgh. The percentage of the population aged 65 and over, at 15.1%, is less than the overall percentage for Scotland of 18.9% in that age band.

There are various operational risks in the area, including, major roads, railways, airport, port and harbours, various commercial, industrial, military, and, as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, significant heritage risks.

There are eight fire stations in the City of Edinburgh. The locations are shown in Figure 2. Table 1 shows the fire station duty system, the resources based there and incident activity.

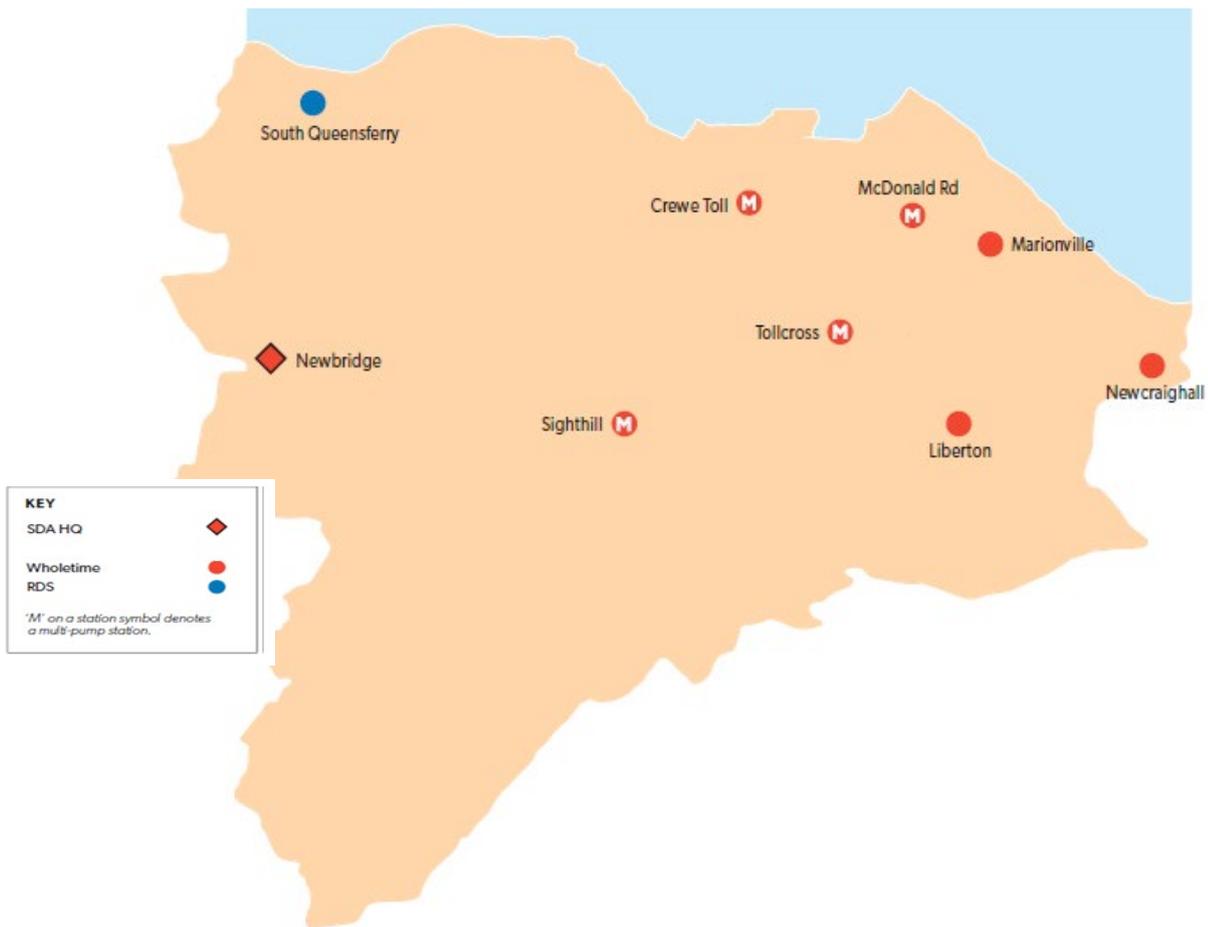


Figure 2: location of fire stations in the City of Edinburgh

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

Fire station	Duty system **	Appliances	Activity* 2018/19
Crewe Toll	Wholetime	2 rescue pumps 1 height appliance 1 prime mover	2,459
Liberton	Wholetime	1 rescue pump 1 command support unit	1,824
Marionville	Wholetime	1 rescue pump 1 water rescue	1,575
McDonald Road	Wholetime***	2 rescue pumps 1 height appliance 1 DIM vehicle	3,258
Newcraighall	Wholetime	1 rescue pump 2 incident support units	1,373
Sighthill	Wholetime	2 rescue pumps 1 heavy rescue	1,950
South Queensferry	RDS	1 rescue pump	138
Tollcross	Wholetime	2 rescue pumps 1 height appliance 1 BA Van	4,579

Table 1: City of Edinburgh 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.

** wholetime crewed appliances are dual crewed with the exception of height appliances

*** although assigned to McDonald Road some vehicles are kept at other fire stations as a consequence of ongoing construction work

Employees². The SFRS has 327 staff posts in the area, 26 (8%) of the staff identify themselves as female.

² as at November 2019

Incident statistics

Table 2 shows the number of incidents attended by the SFRS in the City of Edinburgh over a period of four years³.

Incident type	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Primary fire	1,224	1,171	1,045	989
Secondary fire	1,893	1,874	1,791	1,817
Chimney fire	8	8	5	7
Road traffic collision	143	145	137	105
Other non-fire incident	1,305	1,325	1,322	1,189
False alarm (including non-fire false alarm)	6,833	6,668	6,515	6,612
Total incidents	11,406	11,191	10,815	10,719

Table 2: incidents in the City of Edinburgh

Figure 3 gives a visual reflection of the make-up of incidents within the City of Edinburgh for the most recent available statistics, 2018/19. Please note that the small number of chimney fires are not possible to represent on the chart.

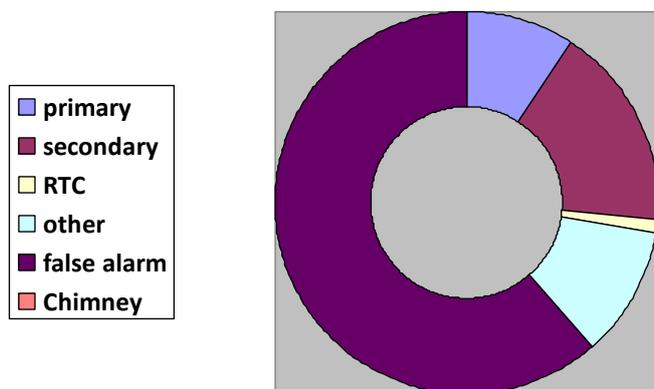


Figure 3: City of Edinburgh incidents 2018/19

Responding to false alarms represents almost 62% of all incidents attended by the SFRS in the City of Edinburgh in 2018/19. Unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS) from non-domestic premises made up 4,013⁴ of these false alarms and therefore comprise 37.4% of all incidents.

³ SFRS, Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics (Scotland), <http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/about-us/fire-and-rescue-statistics.aspx>

⁴ SFRS, KPI report April 2018 – March 2019

The incident rates for 2018/19 are shown in Figure 4 benchmarked against the rates for Scotland. In the City of Edinburgh the rates per population for primary fires are lower than for Scotland, however, the rate for secondary fires, false alarms and non-fire incidents are higher.

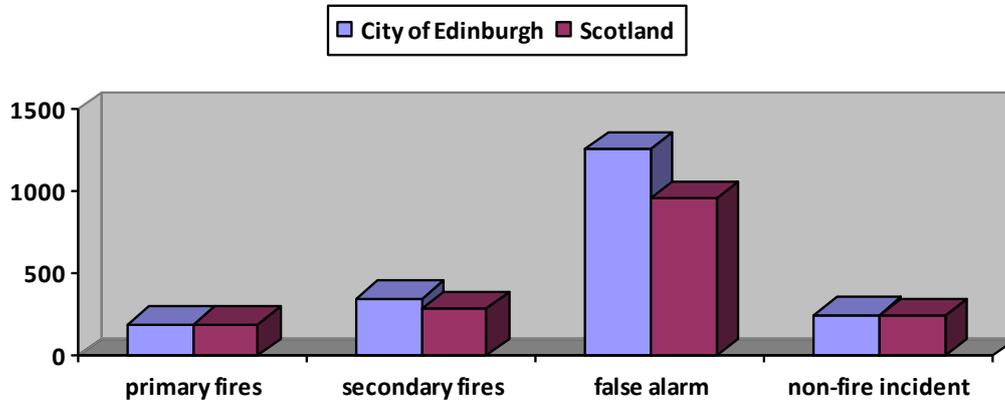


Figure 4: incident rates per 100,000 population, 2018/19 - City of Edinburgh and Scotland

3 Our findings

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 Framework are 10 strategic priorities for the SFRS. To aid the reader, we have replicated the text of those strategic priorities in appendix 1.

3.1 Performance Measures

The local Fire and Rescue Plan and Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

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 Edinburgh was published in 2017.

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.

Following the publication in October 2019 of a new national SFRS strategic plan 2019-22, there is a requirement to review local plans. At the time of writing, the review is expected to be concluded by April 2020. As is our normal practice we will return six months after the publication of this report and will review any changes made to the local plan at that time.

The 2017 Fire and Rescue Plan for Edinburgh includes explanatory and background material, community planning arrangements, and alignment with the community planning vision for Edinburgh, Community Plan 2018 – 2028 (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan) and the four locality improvement plans for the City of Edinburgh.

The SFRS plan contains local fire-related priorities. The SFRS has national targets against which it measures performance, however, the local plan for Edinburgh contains no targets, either locally derived or SFRS national targets, though the station plans, which we discuss later, do contain targets.

The Edinburgh plan identifies six local priorities:

- Operational resilience and preparedness
- Domestic fire safety
- Reducing unintentional harm and injury
- Reducing deliberate fire setting
- Non-domestic fire safety
- Reducing unwanted fire alarm signals

Unlike some other LSO areas we have visited, the City of Edinburgh LSO area does not have a single Annual Operating Plan, but instead an individual annual plan for each fire station - we discuss the station plans further below. In addition to the station plans there are a further sub-set of three thematic delivery plans which provide: a level of detail; a local enforcement delivery plan; prevention and protection plan; and a Training and Employee Development action plan. At the time of writing this last plan is still in draft.

Formal local authority scrutiny of SFRS performance has recently become the responsibility of the Policy and Sustainability Committee and is expected to be carried out three to four times per year. The Service supplies a performance update to the committee which comprises a report on 10 key indicators. We observed one meeting of this committee and found it to operate in a similar way to other scrutiny arrangements we have observed across Scotland.

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 the City of Edinburgh was 4.5% (two responses). In our experience a low response rate is not unusual, but this is the lowest response we've had so far and is perhaps reflective of the changes made to local community planning structures discussed elsewhere in this report.

The responses we received described having limited awareness of Service activity and no formal relationship with the SFRS. Respondents stated it would be useful if the SFRS was to build a relationship and provide information to the community councils on activity, such as awareness of any preventative campaigns or other activity being undertaken.

3.2_Protecting Communities: Risk, Prevention and Response

Safety, Well-being and Prevention

Prevention and Protection

There is a Group Commander and a Station Commander responsible for the management of the Prevention and Protection function.

Community Safety Engagement (CSE)

The CSE team in the City of Edinburgh comprises two Crew Commanders, one Community Safety Advocate (CSA) and three Community Firefighters (CFF), line managed by a Watch Commander with the role of Local Area Liaison Officer (LALO).

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 employability awards such as the Ignite Programme. This CSE activity involves engaging with partners to identify vulnerable persons. Some examples of work undertaken are:

- work with young persons referred by social work or schools
- work with Polmont Young Offenders' Institution
- activity based on a CSE thematic action plan calendar
- talks to youth groups and other groups on request
- safety education at the Risk Factory to P7 pupils
- driving awareness training
- dementia projects
- working with housing providers
- working with vulnerable persons groups

The team describe undertaking a lot of partnership working to address risks to the more vulnerable members of the community. The majority of routine home fire safety visits (HFSV) are made by operational fire crews.

All members of the CSE team have a breadth of fire service experience and have been fulfilling their current role for varying periods of time. All team members describe having a good relationship with partners.

We were advised that terms and conditions for CSE staff were changed in February 2019 and that a review of the changes was planned for December 2019. To date, we understand that the review has not been undertaken. We further understand that the change in terms, introduced a detrimental disparity between the hours worked by CSE staff, who are classed as 'Day Duty Staff' and those of their station based operational colleagues working the Five Group Duty System. Terms and conditions for employees is a national matter for negotiation with the relevant employee representative bodies, and outwith the control of the LSO. However, we believe that the rationale behind the change in working hours and the reason behind the delay in the review of these changes, should be communicated to all those staff affected.

The LALO operates as liaison with City of Edinburgh Council and, although not co-located with council staff, as we have seen in other areas, doesn't believe that this is a disadvantage. The LALO attends a number of multi-agency groups focusing on addressing issues such as anti-social behaviour, hoarding, and adult protection. CSE staff do not routinely attend formal Multi-Agency Tactical Coordination group meetings as we have seen in other areas, to routinely share and update partners on relevant operational activity, however good relationships are reported between the SFRS and partners including Police Scotland, social services and housing officials. It is our understanding that the lack of a formal information sharing meeting does not hamper partnership sharing of information to focus and co-ordinate activity.

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

Initiatives

The CoE Community Action Team (CAT) has started a process with the Scottish Ambulance Service in Edinburgh, ensuring that all ambulances within Edinburgh have the SFRS contact information and referral process for a HFSV. This means that operational ambulance personnel can offer a HFSV referral process to their service users (as appropriate) and make the referrals directly through CSET (Community Safety Engagement Toolkit: an electronic system for managing community safety activity). This updated contact information will be rolled out to include ambulances outside the Edinburgh area on a rolling programme.

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.

The British Red Cross, Camera Safety Partnership and Police Scotland provide input as part of the youth focused courses delivered by the SFRS in the area.

In the run up to bonfire night 2019, safety presentations were provided for both primary and secondary schools. There were no reported acts of violence directed at SFRS crews in Edinburgh in 2019, down from two in 2018. This is the first time in five years that there has been no reported attacks on bonfire night.

City of Edinburgh Council Motor Cycle Community Improvement Plan – Operational crews and CAT are using community intelligence reporting forms to help build a picture of motorcycle anti-social behaviour within problem areas, to assist local community planning partners address the issue.

Operational crews are also involved in participating in initiatives, when operational commitments allow, such as dementia, CPR awareness, and 'Biker Down' (emergency first aid course for motorcyclists).

Deliberate fires

A significant number of the incidents attended are deliberate fires. The local Fire and Rescue Plan has a reduction in deliberate fire raising as a priority. There are a number of initiatives within the Edinburgh area aimed at reducing deliberate fires. Partnership work with Police Scotland and schools in the area was aimed at tackling fire related anti-social behaviour. In 2018/19, deliberate fires decreased slightly on the previous fiscal year⁵.

Figure 5 shows the incidence of all deliberate fires over a four year period.

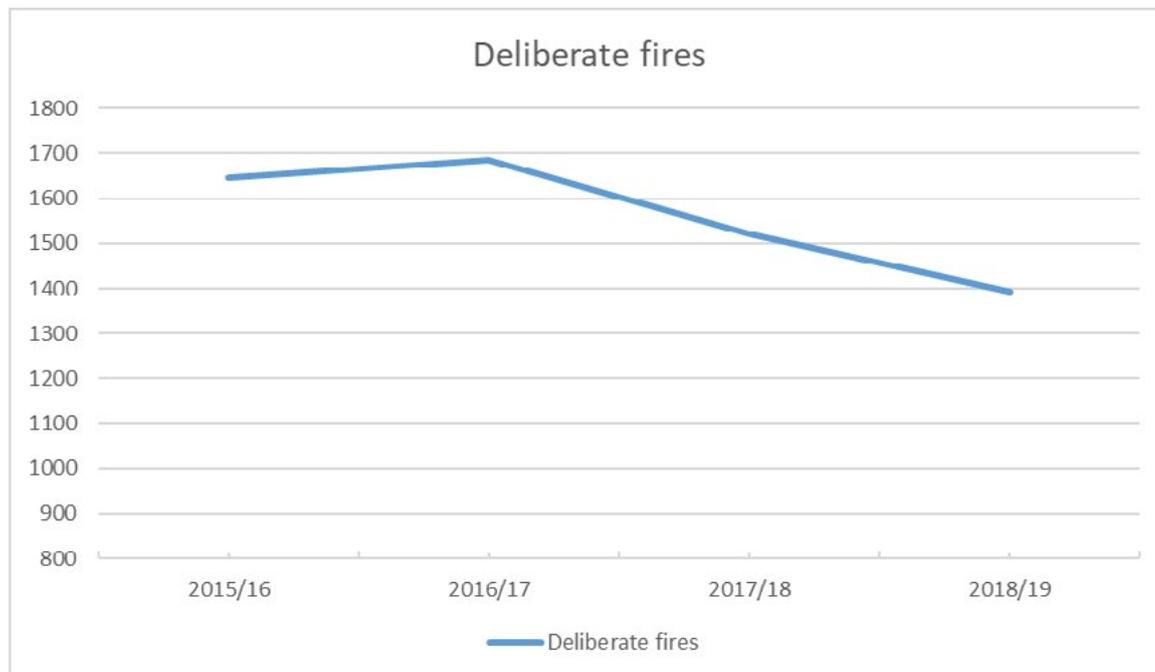


Figure 5: all deliberate fires City of Edinburgh

Domestic fire safety

Home fire safety visits are an established activity undertaken predominantly by fire station personnel. The percentage of households receiving a home safety visit in 2018/19 was 1.9 and is slightly below the Scottish average of 2.8. The number of visits made in the City of Edinburgh has been decreasing as shown in table 3.

	High risk	Medium risk	Low risk	Total ⁶
2016/17	1,255	2,280	1,580	5,115
2017/18	1,271	2,057	1,411	4,739
2018/19	1,191	1,899	1,471	4,561

Table 3: Home fire safety visits City of Edinburgh

Fire station personnel are set a target, contained within station plans, of visits to complete during the year. The expectation is that there will be a focus on households designated as high risk. As can be seen from the data above more visits are carried out in premises classed as medium or low risk. Though we do recognise that gaining access to higher risk premises can be a challenge. 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.

⁵ SFRS, Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics (Scotland), - <https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/about-us/fire-and-rescue-statistics.aspx>

⁶ This data is supplied by the LSO area. The SFRS national statistical publication shows lower totals for each year.

CSE staff compile a performance report, broken down across the station and watch shift cycle, in meeting HFSV targets.

Of course HFSVs are only a measure of activity rather than outcome. Dwelling fire statistics are shown in table 4. The reduction in HFSVs has coincided with a small reduction in accidental dwelling fires.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19*
Accidental fires	492	463	444
Fatalities	3	1	2
Non-fatal casualties ⁷	106	69	107

Table 4: Dwelling fires in City of Edinburgh⁸

*The statistics for 2018/19 are provisional, and revision typically increases counts by a small proportion.

Fire Safety Enforcement (FSE)

Fire safety enforcement is undertaken by a team comprising eight Watch Commanders (enforcement officers) there is an additional vacancy of one. One of the enforcement officers is embedded within the City of Edinburgh Council Licensing Team, primarily providing an assessment of fire safety provision in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) as part of a pre-licensing check, or on re-approval of an existing licence. In addition to HMOs the embed officer also provides fire safety related support and advice in other areas of local authority licensing regimes, for example for premises granted a temporary licence, such as ‘pop-up’ bars during Edinburgh festivals.

The area has an enforcement delivery plan 2019/20, which is based on the standard SFRS template, for carrying out fire safety audits in relevant premises. There is a target of 150 fire safety audits per year per person – which is higher than the 122 audit national target issued by the SFRS. The 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

The SFRS has an emphasis on measuring FSE performance in respect of the number of fire safety audits undertaken. City of Edinburgh enforcement staff see this target as a ‘false indicator’ which does not take account of the building size or complexity. Like staff in other LSO areas, there is a substantial amount of fire safety work undertaken which does not involve completing an audit, for example consultation work which is important in respect of achieving public safety. There are a large number of high-profile international festivals in the area which create a further area of work. We believe that the scale of this workload is challenging, when combined with the other activity including that around addressing UFAS, documented elsewhere in this report, and the support given to station based personnel conducting multi-storey flat inspection work.

⁷ This includes casualties recorded as precautionary check.

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

The numbers of fire safety audits completed are shown in table 5.

2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
783	744	714

Table 5: Fire Safety audits - City of Edinburgh⁹

Of the 714 audits completed in 2018/19, 94.1% were assessed as broadly compliant. Premises types that are targeted for audit in the local area delivery plan also follow the guidance issued centrally by the SFRS. 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 2018/19 of audits completed is higher than the 634 audits stated in the performance data, submitted by the LSO as part of the data request for this inspection.

As part of our data request we asked for a list of recorded relevant premises. We were given information as at December 2019 which reported that there were 1,281 recorded relevant premises in the City of Edinburgh which we know cannot reflect the actual number of potential relevant premises located within the City of Edinburgh. Lists of known premises can be extracted from the SFRS national Prevention and Protection database (PPED)¹⁰ however not all relevant premises are recorded on this database.

Local staff describe their work as being concentrated on Framework priorities, particularly within the tourism and sleeping risk sectors because these are a higher risk.

In common with other areas we have visited, enforcement staff do not have a high opinion of PPED. The 'audit due list' facility on PPED is considered problematic and staff maintain their own spreadsheet to monitor workflow. Staff were also of the view that new SFRS standard paragraphs used to compile letters to dutyholders were of a poor standard. Due to the complexity of IT systems it was also said to be more time consuming, both for FSE and admin support staff to produce letters.

Local management support and relationships are good. There are few opportunities for personal development. There is little networking between FSE staff in different LSO or SDA areas.

Response and Resilience

Appliances

The appliances allocated to the City of Edinburgh area are of a varying age and condition. Despite the age of some, they are generally in a reasonable condition.

Replacement of vehicles is outwith the control of the LSO. In discussion with personnel we were advised of some issues regarding vehicles. Sighthill fire station has a comparatively new heavy rescue vehicle, and we were advised that training in the use of the equipment carried on the vehicle was delayed until after the vehicle was delivered. This was due to insufficient consultation and lead-in time to allow the development and commencement of a training plan for crews. The delay consequently affected the date that the vehicle was able to commence responding to incidents. We feel this could have been avoided had there been more timely

⁹ SFRS, Fire Safety and Organisational Statistics (Scotland)

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'

comprehensive end user engagement between national fleet, R&R, TED and Service Delivery. The line rescue resource at Tollcross fire station does not have the use of a dedicated vehicle. The equipment is carried on standard rescue pumps, consequently stowage for some of the equipment, including the line rescue equipment is difficult.

Equipment

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

An issue that was raised with us a number of times was the perceived lack of radios on the fire-ground, particularly the number allocated to breathing apparatus (BA) teams, where there is one radio between two team members. This is seen by personnel as an issue if, when deployed within the risk environment, something happens to the team member with the radio or there is a technical problem with that radio, then it can be difficult for the other team member to communicate with, or receive messages from, the BA Entry Control Officer.

The SFRS's BA operational guidance policy version 6, 2019 (section 20.2.5) recognises that there may be occasions when radio communications fail. The policy states *'In the event of the BA Team Leader losing their radio communications facility, any other team member may take responsibility for radio communications. Any BA team member may pass a 'BA Emergency' message [our emphasis] should it be necessary'*. In practise, with a BA team of two, we would see this as not being without problems, as the other team member does not have a radio and the team leader's radio is integrated into the BA facemask of the wearer.

We do recognise however that, not all teams are made up of just two personnel, but when it is, the other team member, although potentially not able to pass a message over the radio, could actuate an Automatic Distress Signal Unit to alert to an emergency, if that were necessary.

The BA policy does go on to state that *'If there is an unexpected or sustained loss of communications, an assessment of risk should be undertaken to determine whether BA Emergency Procedures should be initiated and Emergency Teams deployed. Situations where it may be appropriate to declare a 'BA Emergency' may include:*

Unexplained or prolonged loss of communications with a BA team;

Significant incident deterioration linked to a loss of radio communications.'

We consider that the comments made to us around a lack of radios are clearly linked to a health and safety matter also consistently raised, of a BA communications failure which had occurred at an incident. We noted the failure was recorded as a near miss in the information submitted to us, as part of our data request.

The incident took place in November 2018 and was subject to an investigation. We understand the failure is suspected to have been caused by the BA team leader with the radio, wiping moisture from the outside of their facemask, thereby accidentally depressing the on-off button, unintentionally switching off the radio. The BA Entry Control Officer was then unable to communicate with the BA team.

Subsequent to the investigation, a discussion has taken place between the SFRS and the manufacturer of the BA set. It is our understanding that the manufacturer has considered the future reconfiguration of the communications headset to prevent a recurrence of a similar nature. In the meantime, the SFRS are content that although there have been other communications failures, the specific circumstances in this case has been an isolated incident, therefore future reconfiguring of the headset is considered a proportionate approach.

We believe however, that the SFRS should recognise and address the contradiction contained within the wording used in the BA policy as it is currently written which we consider has partly given rise to the concerns of personnel. Although we understand that the incident referred to may have been an isolated one, we are of the view that the Service should also issue an Awareness Briefing, or similar communication, advising operational personnel of the potential to accidentally switch off the radio.

Observations were made regarding the poor quality and quantity of torches.

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

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 asset management system for equipment and its testing. The process in use in the City of Edinburgh is paper-based. The procedure in Edinburgh is to create a new record sheet every calendar year for the equipment. We found the practise of archiving old records to be poor therefore a complete historic record for a piece of equipment is unavailable.

Recommendation

The LSO should, in discussion with colleagues from Response and Resilience Directorate, devise and implement a more robust system for the archiving of records of testing of equipment until such time as a national system is available.

(N): National Recommendation. The LSO should also engage with those centrally responsible for the SFRS's BA operational policy document in order to review section 20.2.5 of version 6, 2019 and remove the contradiction contained in its wording. The Service should also issue an Awareness Briefing, or similar communication, to its operational personnel advising them of the potential to accidentally switch off the BA radio.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Wholetime personnel within the City of Edinburgh have received their allocated new PPE as part of the national replacement programme. Personnel were broadly happy with the quality of the new style issue. We noted that the cleaning and repair of the PPE is not carried out by the original supplier of the garments but by a different contractor. We see that this arrangement creates an element of unnecessary risk to the Service, unless the cleaning and repair systems and process have been appropriately quality assured to ensure that there is no conflict with those of the original supplier of the garments. It is possible to purchase PPE as a complete supply and maintenance package, we are not clear as to the reason why this was not done in this case. Procurement of PPE is a national matter and we would expect that when the current contract expires and a new contract is required, the costs and benefits of a supply and maintain package contract is fully considered, as well as a supply only.

Beyond the question regarding the cleaning contract we were of the view that some of the PPE looked heavily discoloured. We also found at some fire stations that the storage of PPE was untidy and haphazard.

We noted some personnel still had legacy service issue helmet markings.

Respiratory Protective Equipment

A new national standard breathing apparatus set for firefighters was introduced in Scotland in early 2016. These sets are of a different make than those previously in use in the legacy service and are perceived by personnel to be overly complicated to use. In particular the testing regime was thought to be too complex, particularly for the infrequent user, and prescriptive with no explanation of why.

Property

McDonald Road fire station is currently undergoing major alteration and renovation. Part of the station building was previously used as the LSO area headquarters. The work also includes creating a new museum space to replace the one previously housed in the former legacy service headquarters building in Lauriston Place. The contract is significantly behind schedule due to unforeseen structural problems with the roof of the station.

The operational part of the building, including the appliance bays, are no longer in use, with temporary modular buildings being erected in the yard at the rear of the station for the use of the crew. The appliances are being stored outside in the wash bay under a canopy. The LSO, management team and support staff have been decanted to other temporary rented office accommodation in Edinburgh. An operational response is being maintained from McDonald Road and the crews responding from there are doing so in very challenging circumstances. Given these challenges, the personnel we spoke to displayed a positive attitude which we feel reflects the effort made by all, including the Station Commander, to adapt to a less than ideal working environment.

The building work and contractor's site establishment is also impacting on the ability of the crew to use the station yard for training. The photographs below give some idea of the scale of the disruption.



Image 1 Front elevation of McDonald Road Fire Station



Image 2 Rear yard showing part of the contractor's site establishment



Image 3 Rear wash bay showing appliance in temporary location

The structural issues identified in the reinforced concrete roof at McDonald Road have been found in other SFRS properties, including other fire stations in Edinburgh. A report has been made to the SFRS Board outlining the scale of the problem and advising of the initial remedial action to provide temporary structural support for the affected roofs. Overall the situation with the roof of the affected stations will have a significant financial impact for the Service, beyond that already spent on temporary and investigative work. For some stations this will require an in-depth assessment of the cost benefit of repairing the roof against replacing the whole building. The Service, recognising that extensive remedial work may be required at other fire stations, has purchased some temporary modular buildings which can be relocated from McDonald Road, when the work is completed, to other sites. We see this as a good practical approach.

Due to the restricted space now available at McDonald Road some vehicles which were normally mobilised from there have been moved to other fire stations. For example the DIM vehicle is being kept at Marionville, if it is mobilised the crew travel to Marionville to collect it. McDonald Road's height vehicle at the time of our visit was under repair at the manufacturer, when it is returned it is likely to be kept at Newcraighall fire station as there will be no room at McDonald Road. This will create further logistical difficulties for its crew.

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. The Service centrally outsourced a buildings repair and maintenance contract to a national supplier. The view was expressed that the new process has introduced delays to work being carried out, as well as the perception that work is of a poorer quality and costing more than it previously did.

Notwithstanding the roof issue highlighted above, 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 also found there to be a degree of untidiness in some fire stations.

Personnel raised with us the issue of the recent replacement of appliance bay doors and other property work at some stations. The work was perceived to be unnecessary. Capital and Revenue expenditure priorities on premises refurbishment and repair is a national matter, in consultation with LSO area staff. Whilst we cannot comment directly on the work carried out, or the perceptions of personnel regarding quality or cost, we believe that better communication of decisions and rationale regarding building work priorities would avoid negative perceptions. We have made similar comment on this issue in other LAI reports.

Operational Intelligence

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 device within the cab of the fire appliance.

In April 2018 the SFRS introduced a national Operational Intelligence (OI) system. Separately, the provision of risk information was subject to a thematic inspection¹¹ 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. Specifically of relevance to Edinburgh, we highlighted in our thematic report that we felt there were a comparatively low number of premises within Edinburgh for which the SFRS had risk information. While the implementation of the new system did not involve the creation of records for previously unknown premises, we specifically recommended that there should be a focus on the low number of records in Edinburgh. We can report that since our fieldwork in Edinburgh for our thematic inspection, there has been a significant increase in the number of records for premises and risk sites in Edinburgh.

As part of our data request for this inspection we asked for details of the premises for which SFRS now holds records and were provided a list of 411 records. The list can be expected to be dynamic as new records are created and existing records deleted. From an analysis of the data submitted to us there were a number of premises, including care premises, which

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

were substantially beyond the revalidation date set by the system - 1,012 days in the worst case, which was of concern. From discussion with personnel there was a lack of awareness of existence of those records, which was said to be due to the fact the details were stored elsewhere in the Service's intranet, causing review dates to be missed. We feel this indicates a lack of familiarity with the system or the storage of information being overly complex.

The new system uses a demountable tablet computer device. Prior to the system going live in 2018, firefighters in the City of Edinburgh used the legacy Lothian and Borders FRS system and the mobile data terminal (MDT) permanently installed in the appliance cab.

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, one watch in each station has the responsibility of allocating the premises across the other watches to conduct visits.

Training in the use of the new system is via an online package as part of the SFRRS'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 varying levels of skill amongst fire station based staff on the use of the new system. More often than not, the tablet was only used for its mapping capability. This was predominantly due to issues described in our thematic inspection, which are primarily due to the lack of an automatic link to the mobilising system, therefore necessitating manual searching for risk information which is time consuming and at times not straightforward.

A subject we raised in our thematic report was the Service's OI Performance Framework, this defines the scale and frequency of revalidation visits for specific risk types. We were of the opinion that the Framework targets were unachievable and for some premises types unnecessary. In our report we described the requirement for quarterly visits to 100% of premises of five floors and above to be unachievable, particularly in major cities such as Edinburgh. From our fieldwork for this local area inspection, we can confirm that this is the case and it has necessitated a local risk based approach to collecting and re-validating information for this premises type.

Also identified during our fieldwork, and based on the inspectorate's local knowledge, it was noted that the ORI record for a new care home was missing from the list of premises provided. The newly constructed care home had been open and running for a number of months. It was unclear as to why this record was missing, or if indeed it was an isolated case. We believe that there should be a robust system in place to identify and record the presence of care premises, particularly given that this premises type requires a mandatory annual fire safety audit, based on the Service's own fire safety enforcement policy.

SFRRS officers have been engaging with City of Edinburgh Council Housing and Regulatory Services staff to improve operational data on the local authority high rise residential estate. Work has also been undertaken by the local authority to have a standard fire service 'lift key' installed as part of passenger lift refurbishment.

Recommendation

The LSO should ensure that any overdue ORI records are identified and action taken to have them reviewed and the system updated accordingly.

(N): National Recommendation: The LSO should also engage with those centrally responsible for the system to ensure that processes are put in place to automatically 'flag up' overdue records to local managers.

Health and Safety

Health and safety reporting is carried out using the RIVO Safeguard system. Generally, the system is considered very awkward to use by staff who think this is a factor contributing to a low reporting of near-misses. The Service is in the process of introducing 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 but it is our understanding that it will be launched during 2020.

Near-misses are the type of events that occur on the incident ground as well as on-station: however we believe there is a lack of understanding among personnel about the importance of reporting near-misses. Near-miss reporting is described by the Health and Safety Executive as a very important way of identifying problem areas. We have found this issue during a number of other local area inspections which we have carried out and reported on in previous reports.

At a UK level the SFRS benchmarks well in relation to injury rates per 1,000 employees against other fire and rescue services. However for the City of Edinburgh there has been an increase in the number of health and safety events that have resulted in injury over the last three years rising from 12 in 2017/18 to 20 in 2018/19, a 67% increase¹². The increase was attributed to manual handling, body movement and impact related accidents and injuries. As indicated above there are perceived to be issues affecting the recording of near misses. Despite the difficulties it is encouraging that near misses have been recorded - 14 in 2018/19, 8 in 2017/18, and 10 in 2016/17.

Managing Occupational Road Risk

The Service has a national Managing Occupational Road Risk (MORR) policy, the aims of which include:

Reduce the number of accidents and injuries to employees resulting from work-related driving; and, to ensure that risk in relation to work-related driving is assessed in a systematic and ongoing way and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place to eliminate or reduce the risk.

Road Traffic Regulations provide conditional exemption for the emergency response of fire service vehicles in the application of speed limits. However, the SFRS's MORR policy limits its emergency response drivers to a speed limit which is 50% above the legal speed limit relevant to the road. This has specific implications for Edinburgh.

Edinburgh has implemented a city-wide network of roads with a 20 mph speed limit. The majority of roads in Edinburgh, at the time of writing around 80%, have this speed limit and there are proposals to extend the 20 mph network further across Edinburgh. City of Edinburgh Council has carried out an evaluation of the implementation of the 20 mph limit. A paper to the Council's Transport and Environment Committee in October 2019 indicated that there had been a small reduction in average speeds of 1.34 mph across 66 speed survey locations where the limit was reduced to 20 mph.

Under the Service MORR policy, the fastest a SFRS appliance should be travelling to an emergency incident in these designated areas is 30 mph.

When a driver obeys this 30 mph limit when responding to an incident, crews advised that it can be very difficult to pass other road users, who assume that the appliance will speed past. Crews are of the view that the 50% rule in 20 mph limited roads causes confusion in other road users and rather than improve safety, has the potential to cause accidents. Some SFRS

drivers advised us that on occasions, they have no option but to ignore the 50% rule on the grounds of safety, and this poses issues regarding policy non-compliance.

The setting of the legal speed limit is rightly a matter for the City of Edinburgh Council and we make no comment on this, and further, we support the efforts made to improve road safety, both locally and nationally. However, in order to meet one of its stated aims; to ensure that risk in relation to work-related driving is assessed in a systematic and ongoing way, we believe that the impact on Service drivers within the City of Edinburgh of the self-imposed speed restrictions contained in the Service's MORR policy requires reassessment.

(N): National Recommendation

The LSO should, in consultation with colleagues responsible for the MORR policy, assess the impact and appropriateness of the maximum speed policy on drivers in relation to the 20 mph speed limited roads in Edinburgh.

Partnership

Partnership working encompasses formal partnerships, stemming from Community Planning arrangements as defined in legislation, and informal partnerships at an operational level.

At a formal level, the Edinburgh Partnership Board has oversight of Community Planning in Edinburgh, as a statutory partner the SFRS's LSO is a member of that Board. The work of the Partnership is to implement the Edinburgh Community Plan 2018-28 published in October 2018. The plan contains three priorities: enough money to live on; access to work, learning and training; and a good place to live.

The Edinburgh Partnership agreed a new governance framework in April 2019 and established an interim Community Planning Support Team to drive forward delivery of the work programme. In addition to establishing new partnership arrangements, the work programme provided for a range of other activity to strengthen participation and partnership working including the development of a communications strategy and community participation strategy.

Partners were asked to contribute £10,000 to establish a budget to meet the development and operational cost of the Partnership. There was an expectation that this would be an annual contribution. As we have highlighted previously in other local area reports, LSOs have limited autonomy to make certain decisions and this extends to the authority to incur expenditure. The LSOs only access to funding for such a purpose is the SFRS's Chief Officer's Fund. The LSO for Edinburgh has been unable to contribute to Partnership's budget request, the only partner unable to do so. This inability to contribute was seen, by some partners, as a barrier to full SFRS participation in the work of the Partnership. We see this barrier as a consequence of a lack of appropriate local fiscal autonomy, which in the Inspectorate's opinion from the interviews carried out, prevents LSOs truly participating in partnership working and thereby demonstrating local accountability in meeting the varying local needs of communities.

The Community Planning Support Team serves as the link between the Board and the wider Partnership, and it undertook a review exercise in November 2019 to ascertain the effectiveness on the working of the Partnership. This review identified some key issues of concern to them, of which resourcing being one and that some partners were not fully participating in the workload of the Partnership. The review paper, presented to the Partnership Board, stated that 'Embedding partnership more formally within each partner would improve the prospect of success for the Edinburgh Partnership'.

Operationally, at fire station level, good partnership arrangements were described between the SFRS, Scottish Ambulance Service, Police Scotland and HM Coastguard.

At a strategic level, the City of Edinburgh Council is keen to explore the potential to share partner assets, such as buildings, to embed support and facilities at a local level within communities, particularly within new development communities envisaged in Edinburgh, such as the Granton Waterfront Regeneration.

3.3_Evolving Role of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Service Transformation

Issues around transformation of the role of the SFRS are a major consideration for firefighters. The perceived lack of information and uncertainty on future plans for the Service is unsettling for staff.

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 RDS firefighters, most of whom have a short finite opportunity for training, but it also extends to wholetime personnel. This is especially true of those who have specialist response skills such as water and line rescue. 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.

Modernising Response

As part of the SFRS's transformation plans new, smaller, fire appliances have been introduced at certain locations in Scotland, but there are none within the Edinburgh area.

Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

The SFRS has a national target of a 15% reduction in UFAS calls over an average of three years. While the local fire and rescue plan has a reduction of UFAS calls as a priority, it doesn't allocate a target to the scale of that reduction. Table 6 shows that UFAS calls have increased in the latest complete reporting year.

Year	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
calls	2,139	1,893	2,060

Table 6: UFAS calls City of Edinburgh ¹³

Prior to the implementation of the SFRS policy in December 2014, the City of Edinburgh experienced a lower number of vehicle movements in response to UFAS calls. This was as a result of legacy service policy regarding the weight of response to automatic fire alarms. After the national policy was introduced, the number of appliance mobilisations to calls, which are later determined to be UFAS calls, increased substantially. In our thematic report in October 2015¹⁴ we recommended that the SFRS should reflect on the findings of previous reports available, and referenced in our report, on the speed and weight of response to automatic fire alarm calls. We still believe that nationally there is a need for the Service to review this body

¹³ Supplied by LSO in response to information request

¹⁴ HM Fire Service Inspectorate *Managing Automatic Fire Signals* October 2015

of work, and to achieve reductions more quickly than is currently taking place. Particularly given the considerable scale of the issue in Edinburgh, we believe that further local action is necessary.

Currently UFAS calls account for 38% of calls in the City of Edinburgh. Although all fire stations are affected by this in Edinburgh, some stations proportionately respond to more UFAS calls than others, with the consequential negative impact on being able to carry out other activities, such as training. For example, Tollcross fire station responded to 2,194 UFAS calls in 2018/19, that's an average of six per day. That constitutes a considerable disruption to the activity planned for the day. Crews routinely engage with the on-site dutyholder when attending calls that are defined as being a UFAS call to offer advice which combined with the completion of the necessary paperwork, adds to the time taken to conclude each response. Without a reduction in the volume of response to UFAS calls it will be difficult to free-up time to take on additional roles identified within the Transformation Agenda, such as emergency medical response.

In order to manage data relating to UFAS calls the SFRS designed and introduced a UFAS database system. A common comment made by station management teams was that the system was not automatically linked to the Incident Recording System (IRS) and there was therefore a time-lag between the two systems. This time-lag was the reason given for some local commanders maintaining their own manual records for ease of reference when updating the official record. The UFAS database was also seen as being not entirely 'user friendly', with for example, drop-down options not being presented in alphabetic order and being case sensitive, making finding options difficult. This has the potential for inaccurate option selection for ease of completion, contributing to inaccurate data. Local monitoring is undertaken for incomplete records.

Local engagement activity has been carried out within a number of sectors including education, NHS Medical Centres and Universities. Historically these sectors have been a source of unwanted alarms. An initiative 'Take 5' has been delivered in partnership with NHS Lothian aimed at involving NHS staff in the reduction of UFAS incidents at NHS premises. The initiative encourages all staff to 'Take 5' prior to undertaking workplace activity; to consider what they're about to do and how it will affect the fire alarm system. For example, taking 5 moments prior to cleaning the floor with a steam cleaner. The initiative was highlighted by the Service as an area of good practice nationally.

More generally, SFRS fire safety enforcement staff are involved in a process of engagement with dutyholders of premises where SFRS UFAS trigger points for action have been met. One of the enforcement officers is designated a UFAS Champion who is responsible for reviewing UFAS activity in line with SFRS policy, which defines actions to be taken at designated staged trigger points. The review will identify premises that have reached the trigger points, one of which, dependent on premises type, can ultimately lead to a managed reduction in the Pre-Determined Attendance of appliances.

Due to the number of UFAS incidents in the City of Edinburgh, this is a resource intensive process. Although one enforcement officer leads on the work, due to the volume of UFAS calls, other enforcement officers are also involved in the process. Strategic partners within the CPP expressed an interest in knowing which sectors and premises were the most common sources of UFAS calls, with the potential of an offer of assistance.

Recommendation

The LSO should increase the local effort to reduce UFAS calls to achieve further improvement in performance, including engagement with CPP partners to explore the potential for support in addressing the issue, particularly within the business sector.

3.4 Governance, Accountability and Performance

Effective Governance and Performance

Local scrutiny arrangements

As mentioned earlier, reporting of performance is made to the local authority as part of the local scrutiny arrangements. There are 17 wards within the City of Edinburgh and these are grouped into four locality areas; North East; North West; South East; and South West. Each locality has a Locality Improvement Plan. A representative of the SFRS is a member of the Locality Leadership Team responsible for developing and implementing the Plans. The reports of activity made to the council are broken down to the four locality areas which may provide a useful level of detail for elected members. Until recently scrutiny of performance was carried out at the four locality level areas.

From our discussions with the City of Edinburgh Lord Provost; the Chair of the Council Scrutiny Committee; Chief Executive and other senior Council officials, we concluded that the Service is well engaged with strategic partners in playing an integral part in service delivery.

It is an SFRS objective to use Fire Station Plans to demonstrate how the aims of the organisation are delivered locally through relevant actions and targets. Although generic in nature, the Edinburgh station plans are more sophisticated in the targets they set than some we have seen elsewhere. However we believe the plans would still benefit from greater narrative around the rationale for, and definition of priorities.

People

Appliance availability

A wholtime fire station's establishment is based on the Service's crewing level policy, with resilience built in for absences. In practice there are occasions when there are more than the required personnel on duty and other times where there are not enough. The SFRS has a five watch duty system based on a 10-week, continually repeating, shift cycle. The five watch duty system is designed to predict as far as practicable, where surpluses and deficiencies will occur, and realign resources accordingly.

In the 10-week cycle a typical firefighter would not be able to provide their full quota of contractual hours. Therefore, they can be required to work a number of additional shifts to make up their additional hours. Each firefighter therefore has to 'pay back' a number of additional hours (which can be between 10 and 150 hours depending on the roster per annum) to cover for organisational shortfalls (these are generally termed 'Orange' Days). There are also days during the standard shift pattern (up to four) where, due to there being a surplus available, staff may be told not to report for work (generally termed 'Purple' Days). Where this is the case, staff are provided with a minimum of 48-hours' notice.

To ensure the duty system and wholtime firefighter availability operates effectively, the SFRS has a national central staffing section, based in Johnstone. Central Staffing is responsible for arranging the number of wholtime firefighters on duty at each fire station. This is done by the management of leave, controlled use of overtime, the use of the additional (Orange) days and

the use of detached duty staff. Detached duty involves personnel temporarily working from a fire station other than their home station to make up a crewing shortfall.

There are occasions when appliances are unavailable. This can be the result of training commitment, scheduled maintenance, vehicle defect and crew shortages. We concentrate below on unavailability due to crew shortage.

A pump will be unavailable if the personnel at the fire station cannot muster a crew. Availability of wholetime-crewed pumps is influenced by the station establishment and absence rates. Appliances can also be 'dropped' because of personnel shortages elsewhere in other areas, as a result of a deliberate policy to withdraw or 'drop' a pump in order to move staff to other stations to make-up crewing shortfalls. For example, if a pump is one crew member short, that pump may be withdrawn as part of the Service's appliance withdrawal strategy. The remaining crew members, potentially up to three, could then be re-deployed to make-up for crew shortages at other stations. The number of occasions that pumps have been unavailable is shown in table 7.

Fire station	Shifts worked	Occurrences
Crewe Toll		115
Liberton		Nil
Marionville		4
McDonald Road		301
Newcraighall		Nil
Sighthill		274
Tollcross		15
Total	696	709

Table 7: Unavailability - 1st January 2019 - 14th December 2019 348 days

Detached duties and appliance withdrawal has been a major issue and source of frustration and low morale for personnel, across most stations in the City of Edinburgh but particularly at Sighthill and McDonald Road, where there has been high instances of pump withdrawals. This has a negative impact on the ability to meet priority areas such as community safety work and individual personnel's training. As training is not precisely aligned across all stations it can lead to an individual needing to catch-up with training input missed when detached.

The view of the personnel we spoke to was that the five watch duty system and central staffing process are not working efficiently.

The LSO, in combination with other affected LSOs in the East SDA, raised this issue centrally. The Service has subsequently recognised the negative impact that this was having and has recently introduced a revised appliance withdrawal strategy and detached duty zones. Combined, these should improve the availability of appliances within Edinburgh and reduce the number of detached personnel movements. This is primarily due to the introduction of a restriction on the number of pumps that can be withdrawn from within one area at the same time.

The availability of the RDS crewed pump at South Queensferry is shown separately in table 8. Issues influencing the low availability rate at South Queensferry are discussed elsewhere in this report.

Fire station	Availability %
South Queensferry	27.5

Table 8: RDS availability January to November 2019

Recommendation

While the Central Staffing unit is not within the control of the LSO, and, whilst recognising that new detached duty zones and a revised appliance withdrawal strategy have recently been implemented, the strength of feeling among personnel in the City of Edinburgh regarding deployment is so strong that we think the LSO should continue to monitor the effect that staffing issues are having on morale. Additionally the LSO should monitor the success of the introduction of the new detached duty zone and appliance withdrawal strategy, perhaps by undertaking a local survey of staff to gauge the success in improving staff morale.

The SFRS's rope rescue policy requires, as a minimum, a team of 9 trained firefighters, including two qualified supervisors. There have been a small number of occasions when the whole of the line rescue resource from Tollcross fire station (the crews of two pumping appliances and a height appliance), was mobilised to a rope rescue incident some considerable distance from the City. This was done because the nearest line rescue team, which was also mobilised to the incident, was one crew member short. Although this may have only happened on a limited number of occasions, it is a very inefficient and inappropriate way of utilising specialist resources, and unnecessarily reduces the overall response capability within the City of Edinburgh for an extended time. We believe that there are other ways that this shortfall can be addressed without the need to send a complete line rescue team.

(N): National Recommendation

The LSO should liaise with the Response and Resilience Directorate with a view to improving the policy around the mobilisation of the line rescue resource.

Appraisal

We saw evidence that personal appraisals are carried out for operational personnel. The overall quality was variable with some Watch Commanders placing more importance on the process and quality of the end product than others.

Learning and Development

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 competence) modules. There are 12 core modules, 12 standard modules, and 24 advanced modules. These modules apply to wholetime and RDS firefighters.

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.

The SFRS submitted a RDS schedule for training at South Queensferry as evidence for our inspection. The RDS schedule includes:

- all core TfOC modules over 12 months
- all standard TfOC modules over 3 years (plus an equality and diversity module)
- nine of the 24 advanced modules

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). Firefighters we spoke to stated that at times due to operational demand, the MPDP was difficult to keep up with, and they were often in a position of trying to catch-up with what was planned. Sometimes arrangements had to be made to be mobilised to 'known fires only' to allow time for training to take place. The problem of 'catch-up', is exacerbated following staff absence due to leave or sickness or when on detached duty at other stations. Not every station does the same element of training at the same time, though the subjects may align. 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 and concluding assessments were of poor quality and didn't support learning.

Although specifically focusing on RDS firefighter training, we published in March 2020¹⁵ 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, which can prove very difficult to digest and even more difficult to recall when taking the online test at the end of the session.

This training is recorded using the Personal Development Recording (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. Performance monitoring of the completion of training records is the responsibility of the relevant fire station management team. The local training Station Commander also monitors station performance and provides the LSO management team with frequent reports.

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 'hands-on' practical training. A view was also expressed that frequency of some training was now less than it had been, particularly 'live fire' hot training, and of poorer quality with the availability of courses not working effectively, with late notification in some cases. This can be a particular issue for RDS personnel who may have to seek leave from their primary employment to attend training.

¹⁵ Training of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's retained duty system personnel

Training is supported by area based trainers whose priorities and activity is led through discussion with station Watch Commanders. There was a desire on the part of local trainers to be involved in a wider consultation on training needs. There is a rolling three year programme of training and assessment for skills such as incident command competency, trauma care and RTC. Currently there is a shortage of watch-based trainers and better access to suitably qualified personnel was thought by area based trainers to be of benefit in delivering training outcomes.

A variation in teaching techniques between trainers and delivery sites was also raised with us. The differences were said to be apparent when staff are detached to other areas and where staff have received training in the same subject but at different training locations. It was felt that the explanation for this was in the differences in interpretation of the standard, dependent on who you spoke to.

A new training facility at Newbridge opened towards the end of 2019, it may be expected that this facility will have a positive impact on some of the training requirements of the City of Edinburgh personnel, such as BA refresher training. However, at the time of our fieldwork the new site was not fully functioning.

There are a number of specialist resources at fire stations across Edinburgh, for example line and water rescue. Firefighters described finding it challenging to maintain specialist skills in the time available for training. Firefighters providing the water rescue capability also stated that it was becoming difficult to find a suitable local training venue to practise the full skills needed. This was also impacting on the number of occasions that water rescue training is being undertaken.

Effective use of LCMS and PDRPro systems relies on a suitable ICT infrastructure, both in provision of computers and adequate broadband connections. There are issues at some fire stations that have insufficient numbers of fully-functioning computers and good broadband speeds. There is also a WI-FI related issue at South Queensferry which impacts on the delivery of instructor led theoretical training.

Similar to other areas of the Service there is a shortage of trained drivers at a number of fire stations in Edinburgh. An engagement process was undertaken locally to identify operational personnel who could undergo the training to become drivers. The Service had earlier initiated a procurement process to retain the services of an external supplier of Large Goods Vehicle driver training. The procurement process was ultimately cancelled, for reasons not known to the LSO team, with the result that the Service's own driver trainers are unable to meet the demand placed on them to train the thirty-five staff previously identified. There was a high degree of frustration amongst personnel, due to the effort put in by all to identify staff to then have it cancelled. This matter is also putting pressure on the existing drivers and has the potential to affect appliance availability.

(N): National Recommendation

The LSO should seek clarification from procurement colleagues and national TED of the reason for the cancellation of the procurement and what remedial action, if any, will be taken nationally to deliver the intended increase in driver training provision to help resolve the shortage of drivers.

LSO Support Staff

The City of Edinburgh area is supported by a team of support staff, the majority of whom are based at the SDA Headquarters at Newbridge, and who have a shared remit including the LSO area and support to the East SDA, with work fluctuating due to need and priority. The team is slightly understrength and use is made of temporary agency staff. There are training and IT related issues regarding using short term agency staff due to their high turnover. A recruitment process, which was said to be very slow, has been undertaken and permanent staff should be in post in the near future. Recruiting staff to work at Newbridge is problematic due to the lack of public transport links to the site.

A recent national review of admin support has been carried out with a view to disseminate good practice across the Service in support provided. A recent positive development is the creation of a 'landing page' on the East SDA SharePoint site. It is intended that this will provide 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'.

Good Practice

We consider that the creation of a single access portal represents an example of good practice. We believe that greater opportunity should be made of providing central resources, which drive consistency, efficiency and effectiveness, whilst still allowing for adaptation to local needs.

There is a good relationship with uniformed staff, a number of whom were particularly appreciative of the support provided by members of the team. However, similar to their operational colleagues, admin support in the City of Edinburgh has a number of challenges from some national issues:

- IT software issues, especially lack of compatibility between systems
- difficulty finding information on the intranet
- time taken to get permissions to access systems
- lack of training in new systems when introduced

Workforce

The management structure in the City of Edinburgh comprises one LSO, three Group Commanders, and six Station Commanders. A further Station Commander with a remit for training is shared with Falkirk and West Lothian LSO area.

The majority of personnel we spoke to were positive of the station management in the area and felt able to raise issues if necessary but expressed a view that management above that level was somewhat distant.

The biggest challenge in recent years for the RDS crew at South Queensferry fire station has been, and continues to be, the availability of crew. This has been primarily down to staff leaving the Service and a delay in recruitment of replacements. The station currently has three trainee firefighters and a potential three more in the process of joining. Following initial training as can be expected, 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. Until such time as the majority of personnel at South Queensferry are deemed to be competent, combined with a need to have qualified drivers, the station will continue to have challenges in mustering a crew.

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. Employers release can be an important factor for daytime RDS cover. Some personnel we spoke to felt that the support of primary employers went generally unrecognised by the SFRS and felt that steps should be taken to publically acknowledge the support given.

Recommendation

The LSO should examine ways in which the contribution and support of RDS primary employers within the area can be suitably recognised.

City of Edinburgh operational staff sickness absence percentage and average days lost per person are shown in tables 9, 10 and 11. As can be seen the rate has generally been increasing.

Year	Average Days Lost per person	Absence %
2016/17	5.41	3.19
2017/18	5.08	4.14
2018/19	6.35	5.08

Table 9: City of Edinburgh Wholetime staff sickness absence statistics

Year	Average Days Lost per person	Absence %
2016/17	4.9	1.61
2017/18	14.36	4.06
2018/19	12.0	4.73

Table 10: City of Edinburgh RDS staff sickness statistics

Year	Average Days Lost per person	Absence %
2016/17	6.50	3.81
2017/18	1.33	1.72
2018/19	0.25	0.24

Table 11: City of Edinburgh Flexi Duty staff sickness statistics

3.5_Conclusions and recommendations

Our impression of the City of Edinburgh area is predominantly positive about the effort and quality of the SFRS staff there. We did however encounter isolated examples of staff who expressed the view that they were disenchanted with the SFRS and were negative in their view of the Service and the potential changes to the role of a firefighter.

There are strong local partnerships. SFRS staff and managers are seen as contributing to partnership aims, however, it was felt that there was scope for the Service to contribute more.

Responding to false alarms, particularly UFAS calls is a significant problem for some City of Edinburgh fire stations, in the worst case this can be up to six UFAS calls a day, as stated on page 29. Which, in our view, represents a considerable burden, and requires action beyond that already being undertaken locally.

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 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 on the following page for ease of reading. It is important however that these recommendations are not read in isolation, not all of our reflections are included within this listing. The supporting detail contained in the body of this report is crucial to the context and understanding the purpose behind the recommendations.

List of Recommendations

(N) = National Recommendation

- The LSO should, in discussion with colleagues from Response and Resilience Directorate, devise and implement a more robust system for the archiving of records of testing of equipment until such time as a national system is available.
- (N): The LSO should also engage with those centrally responsible for the SFRS's BA operational policy document in order to review section 20.2.5 of version 6, 2019 and remove the contradiction contained in its wording. The Service should also issue an Awareness Briefing, or similar communication, to its operational personnel advising them of the potential to accidentally switch off the BA radio.
- The LSO should ensure that any overdue ORI records are identified and action taken to have them reviewed and the system updated accordingly.
- (N): The LSO should also engage with those centrally responsible for the system to ensure that processes are put in place to automatically 'flag up' overdue records to local managers.
- (N): The LSO should, in consultation with colleagues responsible for the MORR policy, assess the impact and appropriateness of the maximum speed policy on drivers in relation to the 20 mph speed limited roads in Edinburgh.
- The LSO should increase the local effort to reduce UFAS calls to achieve further improvement in performance, including engagement with CPP partners to explore the potential for support in addressing the issue, particularly within the business sector.
- While the Central Staffing unit is not within the control of the LSO, and, whilst recognising that new detached duty zones and a revised appliance withdrawal strategy have been recently implemented, the strength of feeling among personnel in the City of Edinburgh regarding deployment is so strong that we think the LSO should continue to monitor the effect that staffing issues are having on morale.
- The the LSO should monitor the success of the introduction of the new detached duty zone and appliance withdrawal strategy, perhaps by undertaking a local survey of staff to gauge the success in improving staff morale.
- (N): The LSO should liaise with the Response and Resilience Directorate with a view to improving the policy around the mobilisation of the line rescue resource.
- (N): The LSO should seek clarification from procurement colleagues and national TED of the reason for the cancellation of the procurement and what remedial action, if any, will be taken nationally to deliver the intended increase in driver training provision to help resolve the shortage of drivers.
- The LSO should examine ways in which the contribution and support of RDS primary employers within the area can be suitably recognised.

Good Practice

We consider that the creation of a single access portal represents an example of good practice. We believe that greater opportunity should be made of providing central resources, which drive consistency, efficiency and effectiveness, whilst still allowing for adaptation to local needs.

Glossary and abbreviations

CFF	Community Firefighter
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
LALO	Local Area Liaison Officer
LCMS	Learning content management system: an online learning resource for firefighters
LSO	Local Senior Officer: by law the SFRS has to appoint a LSO for each local authority area in Scotland
PDRPro	Personal Development Recording: PDRPro is an electronic system used by both Wholetime and Retained firefighters to record training and learning development, both from formal training and from continuous development obtained during actual incidents
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
SDA	Service Delivery Area. The SFRS is organised into three SDAs, North, East and West
SFRS	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
TED	Training and Employee Development
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.

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.



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