



Inspection of the  
Scottish Fire  
and Rescue Service

**East**

**East**  
Service Delivery Area

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# About this inspection





1. This is the first report of a new format and cycle of Service Delivery Area Inspections of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS).
2. Since the SFRS was established in 2013, HMFSI has undertaken inspection of local service delivery at a local authority level. Going forward, reports on the inspection of local service delivery will be at the aggregated level of the SFRS's Service Delivery Areas (SDAs). The SFRS's organisational structure has three SDAs: North; West; and East. The management of each SDA is overseen by a Deputy Assistant Chief Officer (DACO).
3. A number of the local authority areas making up the East SDA have previously been the subject of a local area inspection by HMFSI, namely, City of Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scottish Borders, and West Lothian. In this new approach to inspection we have revisited these areas along with those local authorities not previously visited; Clackmannanshire; East Lothian; Falkirk; Fife; and Stirling.
4. The format for reporting our cyclical inspection activity has also changed, our findings and recommendations contained in this report are based on our inspection of service delivery at a Local Senior Officer (LSO) level and are aggregated at a SDA level to inform our judgements/grading; however, we still take cognisance of local authority area activity. We have adopted a sampling approach in conducting this inspection, as such we cannot identify all potential areas for improvement or areas of good practice. We intend that it should be a proportionate activity that provides an overview of the East.
5. As another first we undertook a short anonymous survey of all SFRS staff based within the East SDA. We are grateful to all those who took time to complete our questionnaire, a summary of the findings from this survey can be found at Appendix A.
6. This report focuses on four key themes; Prevention and Protection; Response; Partnership; and People.



7. Appendix B gives a synopsis of LSO area performance data, Appendix C contains information about HMFSI and Appendix D provides detail of how this inspection was carried out.
8. Our inspection took place shortly after the introduction of the new Scottish Government Fire and Rescue Framework 2022. At the beginning of our inspection the SFRS commenced a consultation on its new Strategic Plan 2022-25. The SFRS's Strategic Plan sets out how the Service intends to deliver against the priorities developed by the Scottish Government within the Framework. Due to the timing differences between the old Plan and new draft Strategic Plan we have considered the impact of both on measuring the Service's performance within the East SDA. Following the approval by Scottish Ministers of the Strategic Plan, the SFRS must review the Local Fire and Rescue Plans discussed later in this report.

#### What inspection judgments mean:

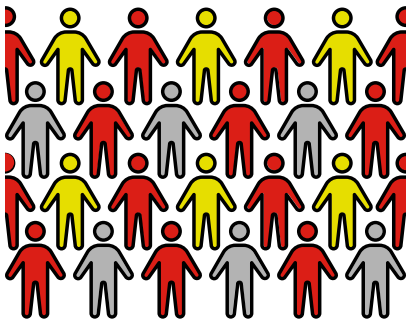
9. In making our assessment of how effective the SFRS is in the ESDA, we use the following gradings:

	<b>Opportunity for improvement</b>	where we find important failings of policy, practice or performance which require improvement.
	<b>Satisfactory</b>	where we find limited shortcomings in the area being considered.
	<b>Good</b>	where we find important strengths in performance.
	<b>Outstanding</b>	where we find performance which significantly exceeds Good.

10. The awarding of levels using a quality judgement is derived by the use of Inspector's professional experience and knowledge, based on evidence and observation, rather than a technical process.

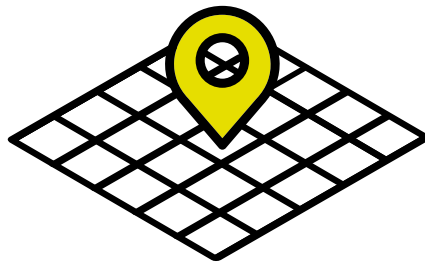
# East Service Delivery Area in numbers

11. The East Service Delivery Area, shaded in red in figure 1 serves a population of 1.7 million people, and covers an area of some 10,424 square kilometres. East area crews are based at 65 fire stations. As at 31 March 2022 1,427 SFRS service delivery personnel were based in the East, of those, 1,412 are uniformed staff.



**1.7m**

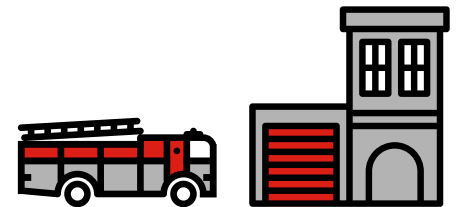
The East Service Delivery Area serves a population of **1.7 million people**.



**10,424km<sup>2</sup>**

based across a wide ranging geography of some **10,424 square kilometres**.

**65**



East area crews are based at **65 fire stations**.

As at 31 March 2022 **1,427 SFRS service delivery personnel\*** were based in the East, of those, **1,412 are uniformed staff**.

**1,412** uniformed **staff**



\* Total Full Time Equivalent provided by LSO Area by SFRS. There may be a slight variance in total numbers due to rounding.

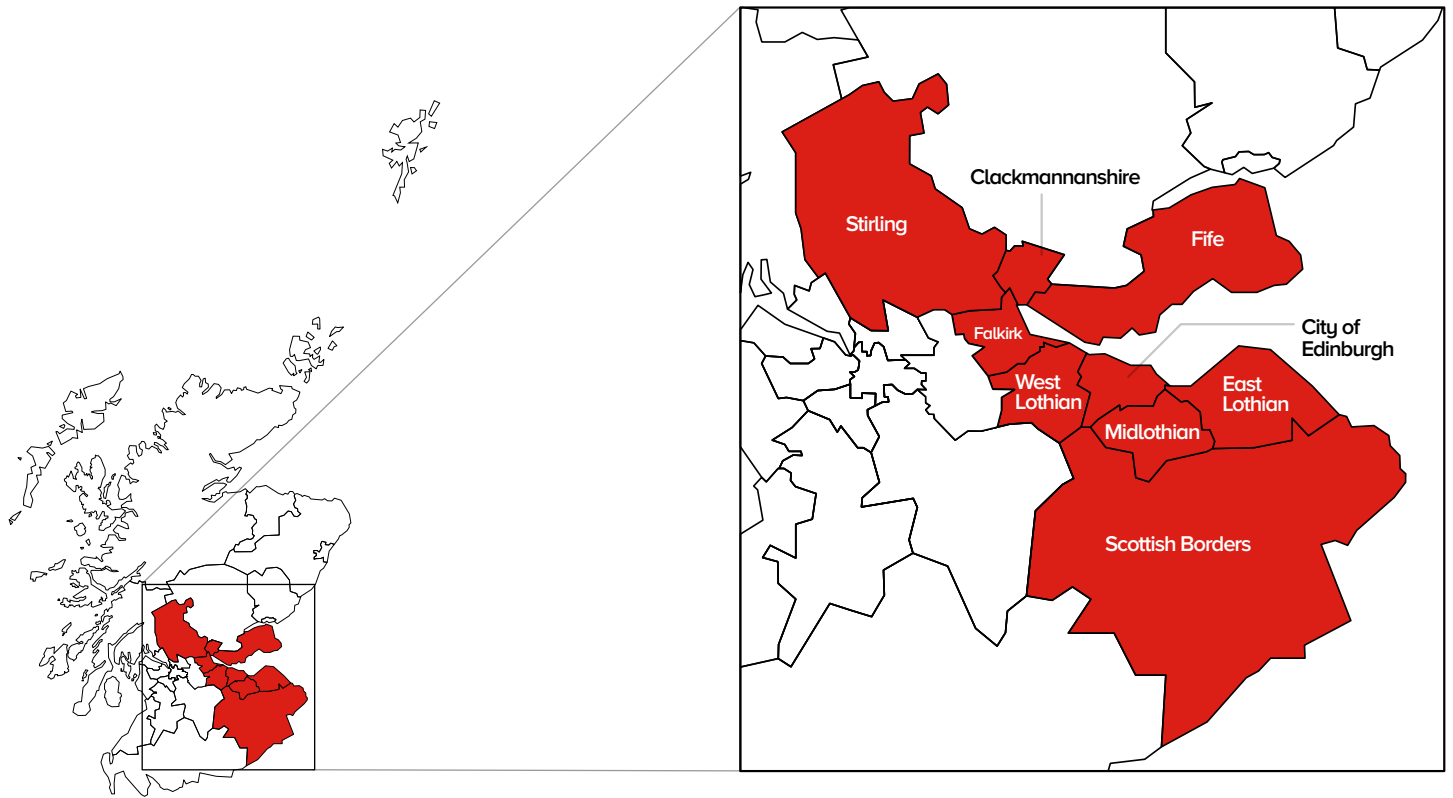


Figure 1 Scottish Council Area Boundaries: East SDA

12. The area is made up of the following local authorities; the City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders, Stirling, and West Lothian.

13. There are four Area Commanders who are designated, under the Fire (Scotland) Act, as local senior officers (LSOs). These LSOs lead the management of the SFRS’s activities in the East. They each have responsibility for the SFRS activities in allocated local authority areas. Excluding the City of Edinburgh (CoE), which has its own LSO, the other local authority areas are grouped into larger LSO areas: Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Fife (SCF), Falkirk and West Lothian (FWL) and Midlothian, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders (MELSB).

## LSO Area Stirling, Clackmannanshire, Fife (SCF)

### Stirling

14. There are ten fire stations in the Stirling area: one, Stirling, is staffed by Wholetime personnel; the remaining nine, Aberfoyle, Balfron, Bridge of Allan, Callander, Criannarich, Doune, Dunblane, Killin and Tyndrum, are staffed by On-Call personnel. Across the ten stations there are eleven fire appliances, one water rescue unit and one wildfire unit.

### Clackmannanshire

15. There are two fire stations in the Clackmannanshire area: Alloa is staffed by both Wholetime and On-Call personnel, whilst Tillicoultry is staffed entirely by On-Call personnel. Across the two stations there are three fire appliances.

### Fife

16. There are thirteen fire stations in the Fife area: five, Dunfermline, Glenrothes, Kirkcaldy, Lochgelly and Methil, are staffed by Wholetime personnel. Eight, Anstruther, Auchtermuchty, Burntisland, Cupar, Newburgh, St Andrews, St Monans and Tayport are staffed by On-Call personnel. Across the thirteen stations there are twenty fire appliances, one water rescue unit, one rope rescue unit and two height vehicles.

## LSO Area Falkirk and West Lothian (FWL)

### Falkirk

17. There are five fire stations in the Falkirk area: three, Bo'ness, Falkirk and Larbert, are staffed by both Wholetime and On-Call personnel. Two, Denny and Slamannan are staffed entirely by On-Call personnel. Across the five stations there are nine fire appliances, one command support unit, one height vehicle, one high volume pump and one water bowser.

### West Lothian

18. There are six fire stations in the West Lothian area: two, Bathgate and Livingston, are staffed by both Wholetime and On-Call personnel. Four, Broxburn, Linlithgow, West Calder and Whitburn, are staffed entirely by On-Call personnel. Across the six stations there are eight fire appliances and one water rescue unit.

## LSO Area City of Edinburgh (CoE)

### City of Edinburgh

19. There are eight fire stations in the City of Edinburgh area: seven, Crewe Toll, Liberton, Marionville, McDonald Road, Newcraighall, Sighthill and Tollcross, are staffed by Wholetime personnel. One, South Queensferry, is staffed by On-Call personnel. Across the eight stations there are twelve fire appliances, one heavy rescue unit, two height vehicles, one rope rescue unit, one urban search and rescue (USAR) unit, one water rescue unit, one DIM (Detection, Identification, and Monitoring) vehicle, one mass decontamination unit, and one command support unit.

## LSO Area Midlothian, East Lothian, Scottish Borders (MELSB)

### Midlothian

20. There are two fire stations in the Midlothian area: Dalkeith is staffed by Wholetime personnel whilst Penicuik is staffed by On-Call personnel. Across the two stations there are two fire appliances. The crew at Dalkeith form part of a USAR capability maintained across the two LSO areas of the City of Edinburgh and Midlothian.

### East Lothian

21. There are six fire stations in the East Lothian area: one, Musselburgh, is staffed by Wholetime personnel. Five, Dunbar, East Linton, Haddington, North Berwick and Tranent are staffed by On-Call personnel. Across the six stations there are eight fire appliances.

### Scottish Borders

22. There are thirteen fire stations in the Scottish Borders area: two, Galashiels and Hawick, are staffed by both Wholetime and On-Call personnel. Eleven, Coldstream, Duns, Eyemouth, Innerleithen, Jedburgh, Kelso, Lauder, Newcastleton, Peebles, Selkirk and West Linton are staffed entirely by On-Call personnel. Across the thirteen stations there are seventeen fire appliances and one water rescue unit.

# Overview of incident data in the East SDA



In the year to 31 March 2022 there were **seven fatalities in accidental dwelling fires** in the East SDA,



a **decrease of four** from the previous year.



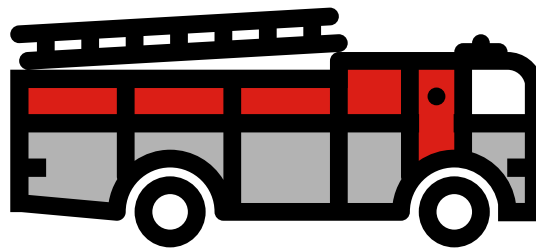
There were **153 accidental dwelling fire non-fatal casualties**.



resulted in



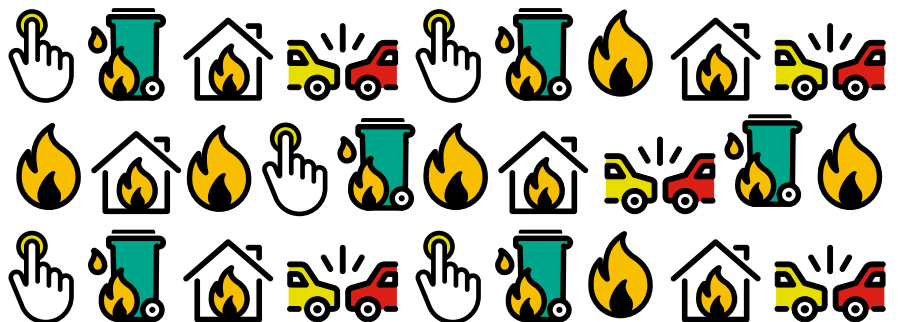
Of the **16,247** reported fire false alarms, **56% (9,136)** were **unwanted fire alarm signals**.



Those 9,136 UFAS calls resulted in a total of **13,083 fire appliance mobilisations** in the year to 31 March 2022.



Fire stations in the ESDA attended a total of **29,039 incidents** in the year to 31 March 2022.





**East SDA**

Number of Incidents Attended



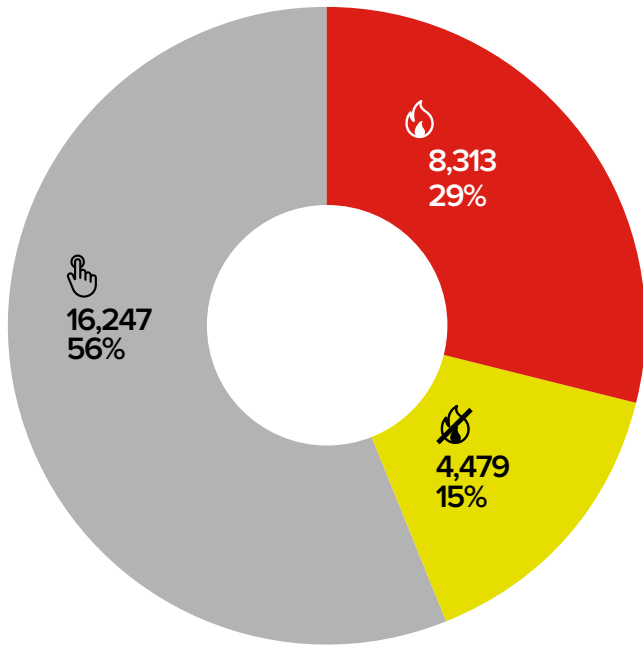
Fire Incidents



Non Fire Incidents



False Alarms



**East SDA**

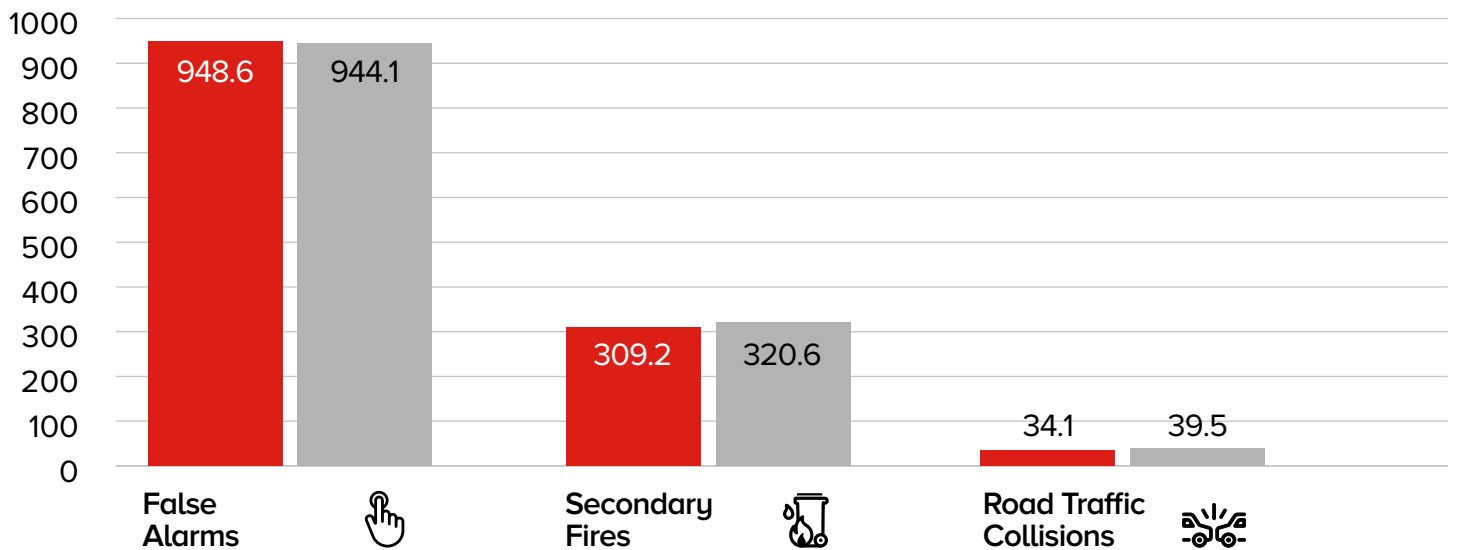
Incidents per 100,000 Population 2021-22



East SDA



Scotland



**East SDA**

Accidental Dwelling Fires per 100,000 Dwelling Properties 2021-22

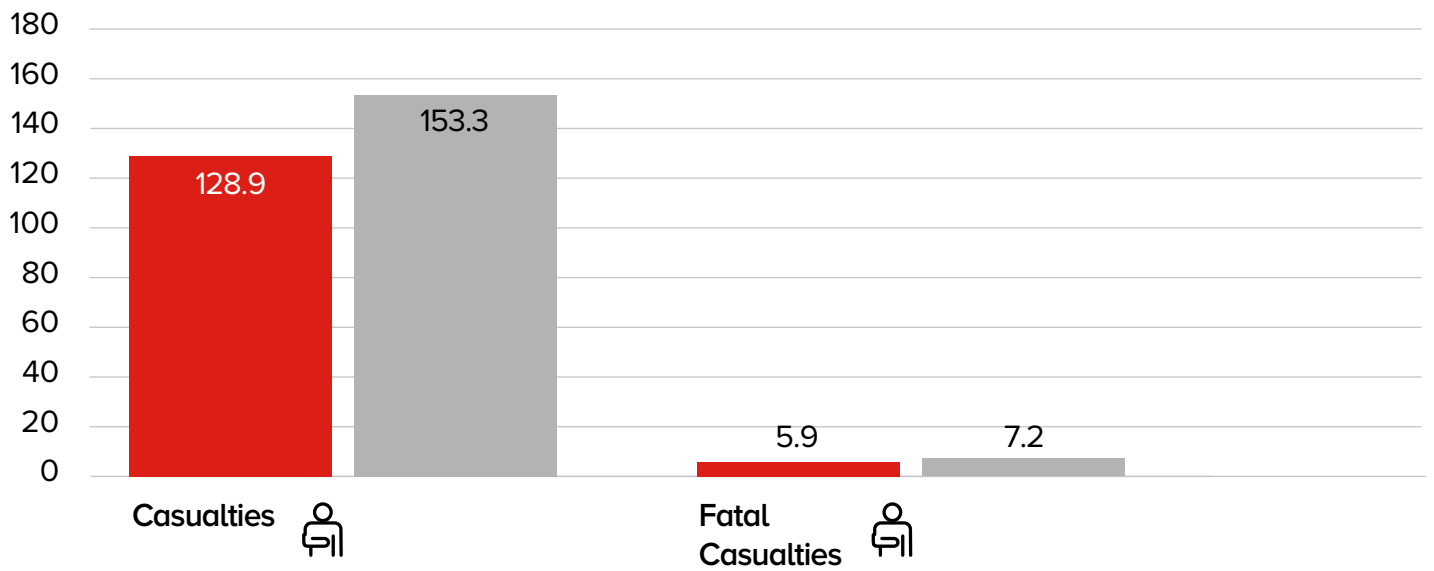
■ East SDA ■ Scotland



**East SDA**

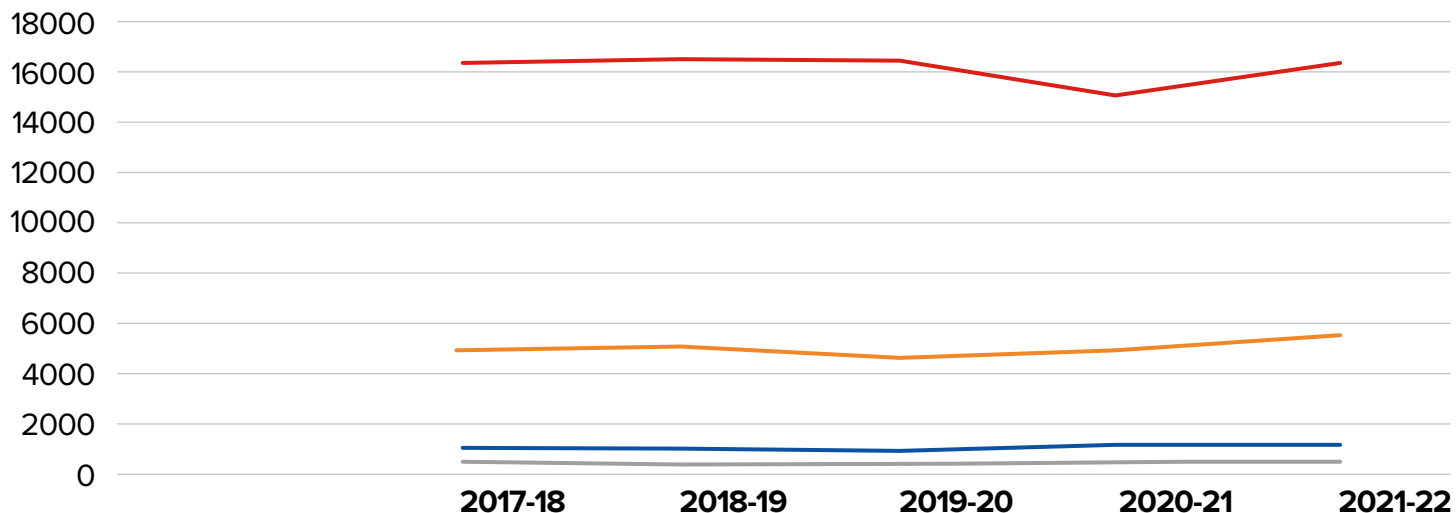
Number of Casualties per 1,000 Fires 2021-22

■ East SDA ■ Scotland



### 5-Year Trend

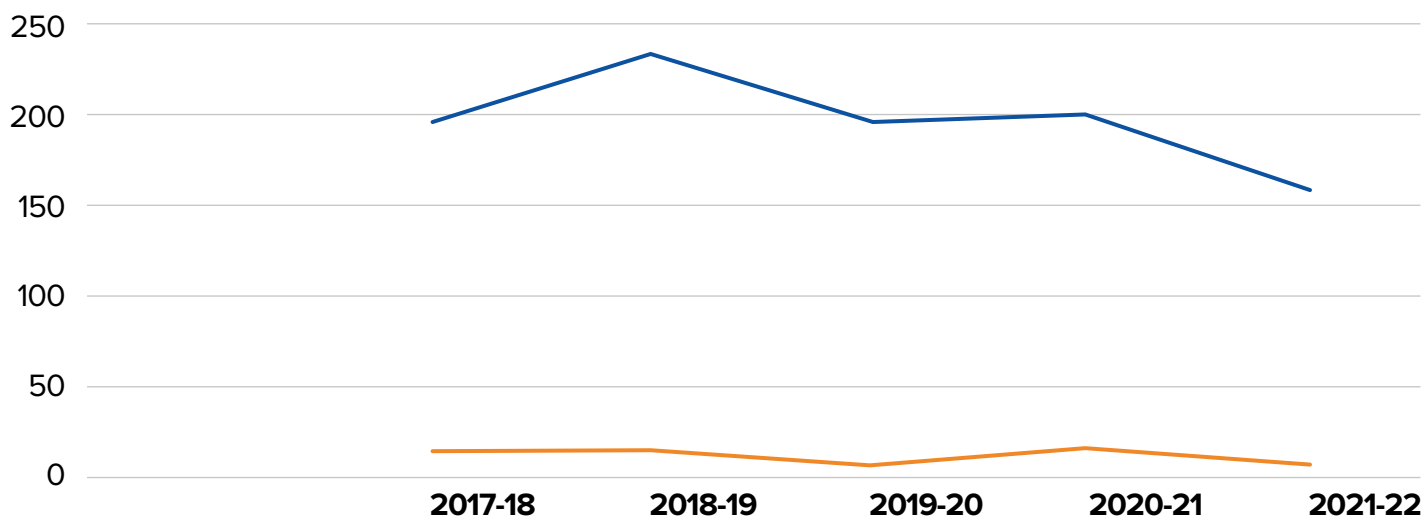
#### East SDA Incidents



	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
False Alarms	16342	16480	16469	14583	16247
Secondary Fires	4941	5118	4154	4430	5296
Accidental Dwelling Fires	1355	1266	1180	1076	1187
RTCs	757	665	690	450	584

### 5-Year Trend

#### East SDA Dwelling Fire Casualties



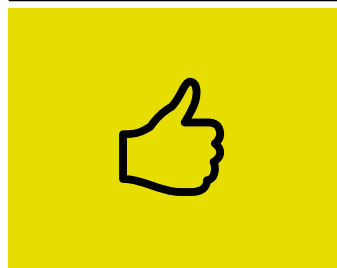
Dwelling Fire Casualties	198	231	199	200	153
Dwelling Fire Fatal Casualties	10	11	5	11	7

# HMFSI East SDA Ratings Matrix



## Prevention and protection

How effective is the Service in the East SDA at keeping people safe? We consider this to be **satisfactory**.



### Understanding fire and other risks

The Service has a broadly good understanding of the risks across the East SDA. There is evidence of response arrangements being adapted to meet changes in risk.

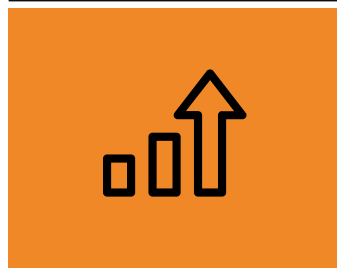


### Preventing fire and other risks

Its prevention activity is targeted at those assessed as being most at risk from fire and other risks and is designed, and occasionally delivered, in partnership with others.

There was limited evidence of support from the Prevention and Protection Directorate leading to a strong feeling of detachment and disengagement by some staff.

The system used to support prevention delivery was said to be not attributing activity correctly to the East and was said to be too restrictive in its scoring matrix.



### Protecting the public through fire regulation

Whilst fire safety enforcement activity is conducted to a satisfactory level, the ability to meet audit targets has been impacted by a reduction in staff numbers. There are continuing issues with the enforcement recording system.





## Response

How effective is the Service in the East SDA at responding to incidents when they do occur? We consider that the Service's response is **satisfactory**



### Preparing to respond to fires and other emergencies

The Service has assessed local risk and developed response plans accordingly; it has an exercise regime to test these plans in conjunction with partners where relevant; and has processes in place to amend plans as required.

There is a national system to access and store risk information. We have indicated in previous reports that access to this information has been problematic, due to issues with the system and the firefighter interface, a demountable tablet device. It is of concern that this situation continues, with many problems still unresolved.



### Responding to fires and other emergencies

There is an operational assurance process and recording system to evaluate operational performance. It supports organisational learning, though a lack of direct feedback was said to be disengaging staff.

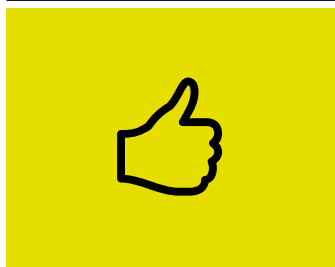
There are regular occasions when Wholetime fire appliances are withdrawn from operation due to staff shortages. On-Call crewed appliance availability, particularly during the day, remains a challenge.

The operational assets are broadly fit for purpose there are however, some significant issues regarding the fabric and facilities at some fire stations. There are opportunities to improve the quality and provision of some equipment and to a lesser extent fleet, where some appliances are beyond their effectiveness due to age. Better use could also be made of some specialist appliances.



## Partnership

How effective is the Service in the East SDA at working in partnership with others to improve community safety outcomes? We consider that partnership working is **good**



**Actively supporting partnership working to identify and protect the most vulnerable in the community**

There is good partnership working across the area, both at formal and informal levels. The statutory community planning partnership structures are supported by officers within the East. There are formalised referral pathways between partners to share information regarding those who are deemed to be at greatest risk.

The style and content of scrutiny committee performance papers was valued and liked by local authority partners.

Whilst SFRS continues to work with relevant partners to develop the Community Asset Register (CAR) and to promote its use, awareness of the CAR is inconsistent with frontline staff.

Some partners expressed frustration relating to the continual turnover of officers who are part of partnership structures.



**Opportunity for improvement**



**Satisfactory**



**Good**

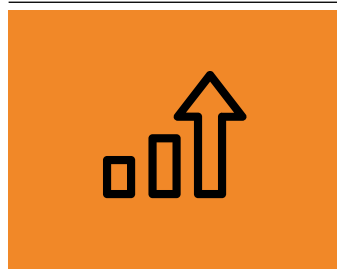


**Outstanding**



## People

How effective is the Service in the East SDA at managing and supporting its workforce? We consider that there is an **opportunity for improvement**

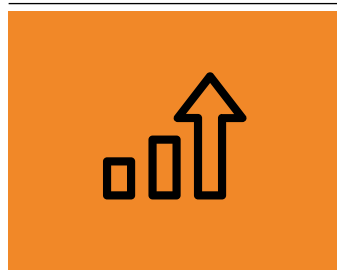


### Managing performance and developing leaders

Recent changes to firefighters' pensions have brought about a significant spike in the number of retirements with a consequent reduction in staff numbers and loss of experience.

Developing and promoting leaders has not shown the desired consistencies that staff would like or expect. The officer turnover also has a consequential negative impact on staff managed and to a lesser degree engagement with partners.

There is an appraisal process but there was limited use of this for On-Call staff.



### Ensuring people have the right skills and training

A lack of assessors and verifiers was said to be hampering the development of trainee firefighters.

There are encouraging signs that On-Call recruitment is getting more efficient with a degree of flexibility in how initial training course requirements are achieved, though there remain issues regarding lengthy recruitment timescales in some areas.

Training is said to be under-resourced with shortages of instructors leading to the cancellation of courses and non-delivery of some specialist skills.

The Service's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure is a barrier to the delivery and recording of training, particularly for On-Call staff.

There is not equitable access to Continued Professional Development opportunities.



**Opportunity for improvement**



**Satisfactory**



**Good**



**Outstanding**



## People

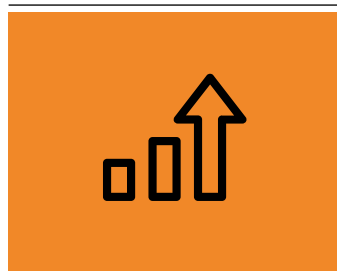
How effective is the Service in the East SDA at managing and supporting its workforce? We consider that there is an **opportunity for improvement**



### Supporting mental and physical wellbeing

There are systems and processes in place for personnel to access support from occupational health professionals.

Staff were mainly complimentary about the mental health support available to them.



### Promoting equality and diversity

Gender balance and workforce representation from minority ethnic groups continues to be disproportionate.

There is mandatory Professional Behaviours and Equality training for staff.

The Service has a Positive Action Strategy to improve workforce diversity, but we feel it requires a review and refresh.

The SFRS was awarded the Stonewall LGBTQ+ Inclusive Employer Silver Award for 2023. Whilst this is a welcome development there has been limited improvement in overall workforce diversity.



# Conclusion

23. We are satisfied with some aspects of the performance of the SFRS within the East SDA, in keeping the public safe and secure through prevention and protection activity, how it plans for, and responds to incidents when they do occur, and in how it engages with partners. We believe however that there are opportunities to improve performance in relation to training, leadership development and equality and diversity.
24. Due to the organisational structure of the SFRS the responsibility for the development of policies, procedures and standards lies mostly with central directorates. Although there is a development consultation system in place, there is a perception amongst some of the workforce that there is limited scope for either Local Senior Officers or for the Head of Service Delivery in the East to initiate changes and improvements.
25. The Inspection team would like to offer our thanks to Stewart Nicolson, the East SDA DACO, and his staff, who positively engaged and worked with us during this new approach to area inspection.

## Summary of findings

### Prevention and protection - How effective is the Service in the East SDA at keeping people safe and secure?

26. **To be effective the fire and rescue service must identify and assess the full range of relevant and foreseeable fire and rescue risks its communities face. It should target its prevention activities to those who are at greatest risk and enable compliance with fire safety legislation through its protection work, carrying out enforcement action when required. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness within the East SDA is judged to be Satisfactory.**
27. The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 (the Act) requires the SFRS to publish a Local Fire and Rescue Plan for each local authority area. The plans set out the SFRS's priorities and objectives for that 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. We have examined all the local area plans in the East. As mentioned earlier, following approval of the Service's new Strategic Plan, these Local Fire and Rescue Plans must be reviewed. We conducted this inspection on the basis of the Plan's currency at the time.
28. The plans give a description of the area, highlighting the various risks which may exist and, where relevant, the actions of the SFRS and its partners to mitigate those risks. As might be expected there were similarities in the content of the plans aligned to the LSO areas. Some, but not all, contained targets by which performance could be gauged. The LSO areas of Falkirk and West Lothian; and City of Edinburgh publish targets for several local priorities.
29. The Service, through these plans, has assessed a good range of risks and threats. When assessing risk, it has considered relevant information from a broad range of internal and external sources and data. This includes data from other blue light organisations and resilience partners, historical incidents, social and economic information. There was evidence of adjusting response plans based on changes in identified risk. In some LSO areas, in line with the SFRS's planning structure, there are also individual station plans which give a more local context and direction for activities to be carried out, and in some cases targets to be achieved. Where these plans existed station-based management teams broadly found them useful.
30. The Service has responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to work in partnership with other organisations, through the East Of Scotland Regional Resilience Partnership (RRP), and compile a Community Risk Register<sup>1</sup>. The Community Risk Register is the result of risk assessments carried out by the partnership members, to identify the likely risks in the area and rate them in terms of their potential impact and likelihood of occurring. The results of these assessments are used to inform the RRP and produce agreed and effective multi-agency plans and procedures. The Community Risk Register considers eight potential generic risks within the area, describes possible consequences, outlines what the RRP members are doing, and also what the public can do themselves to mitigate risk.

1 <https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-area/community-risk-register/>

31. Resilience activity is further sub-divided into Local Resilience Partnership areas; Fife; Forth Valley; and Lothian and Borders. Each of these area partnerships produces a plan.
32. Preventing incidents occurring in the first place is the best and most effective way of mitigating the impact of fire and other incidents. Each LSO area has a prevention and community engagement plan, which guides personnel when they are carrying out a range of prevention activities within the East SDA. Prevention is focused on the people most at risk from fire and other hazards, such as road traffic collisions. Prevention work, carried out by frontline operational firefighters and personnel dedicated directly to community safety, seeks to improve the safety, health and wellbeing of communities leading to a reduction in incidents, injuries, and fatalities. The Service is working with a wide range of partners, using referral pathways across a number of sectors, to identify and target its activity appropriately. There are also examples of Service personnel working to address social inequality.
33. In some areas of the East SDA there are issues regarding the number of deliberate fires, predominantly those classed as secondary fires, such as grassland and refuse fires. Prevention activity in the context of these deliberate fires mostly takes the form of working with young people aimed at tackling this type of anti-social behaviour in conjunction with other partners.
34. Protection activity is the type of work that involves the Service working with people who have duties under fire safety legislation, to ensure the safety of employees, residents, visitors or customers in relevant premises. For the majority of non-domestic buildings in Scotland the Service is the enforcing authority for fire safety.
35. Under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 the SFRS is a regulator and the Service operates a system which includes carrying out proactive fire safety audits within premises, reactive audits in premises where fires have occurred, and dealing with complaints, enquiries and contraventions. Proactive audits are carried out using a risk-based approach, following a national enforcement framework, which focuses on those premises which present the highest life risk from fire, such as care homes, hospitals and sleeping accommodation premises.
36. Broadly speaking, enforcement staff are finding it difficult to meet the nationally derived audit targets, beyond defined framework premises, in the East SDA. This is primarily due to a shortage of Enforcement Officers, for example within the City of Edinburgh LSO area there should be nine staff, at the time of our visit there were four and two of these weren't yet fully qualified. Similar to other areas across the East SDA, during 2022 following the change to firefighters' pensions there was an unexpected increase in retirements. Managers within the Protection function are actively trying to backfill vacancies, however, as would be expected it takes time to become a fully qualified Enforcement Officer.
37. Some Enforcement Officers we spoke to felt that if they were able to record fire safety audit findings on a mobile device, which was connected to a national recording system, whilst conducting the audit, it would release time and remove duplication of effort thereby generating efficiencies and a faster completion of audits. We have reported in previous inspection reports that enforcement staff have a generally poor opinion of the current SFRS national Prevention and Protection Enforcement Database (PPED), which is used to record premises and audit outcomes. Because of historical issues with PPED, such as losing records, the majority of staff maintain their own separate records.

38. The Service also has a quarterly inspection programme for high rise domestic buildings. The purpose of these Operational Assurance Visits is to provide visiting crews with familiarisation of the premises and to check dutyholder compliance with fire safety requirements. These visits are normally carried out by operational crews rather than fire safety enforcement staff; however, in the City of Edinburgh, where there are a large number of residential high rise buildings, enforcement staff are involved in compiling any required letters to dutyholders, outlining deficiencies where these are found. The enforcement staff we spoke to said that this was an additional workload where enforcement resources are already stretched. Beyond the impact on enforcement staff, there is also the scale of the task for operational crews conducting the visits. Two Edinburgh fire stations are particularly affected because of the number of high rise premises within their station areas. Locally managers have prepared a risk based strategy to reduce the impact of this activity. To date this risk based approach has not been introduced and consequently these visits continue to be a significant workload for operational crews and enforcement staff at a time of reduced resources.
39. A natural part of a fire prevention strategy should be an understanding of how fires start in the first place. The SFRS has a fire investigation capability which is geographically located within the three SDAs. The team in the East is located at Livingston. Although based within the East SDA the DACO has no direct control over the operation of the fire investigation team.
40. The significant findings from fire investigations should influence both prevention strategies, and where appropriate, efforts to improve firefighter safety. There should therefore be a direct link between fire investigation outcomes, incident debriefs, and operational assurance. Although there are national systems to debrief operational incidents members of the fire investigation team that we spoke to are of the opinion that their activity could add greater value to organisational learning if there was a more formalised mechanism for them to do so.
41. In June 2022 there was a restructure of the function, which was followed up by a six month review. At the time of writing we are unsighted on the result of that review. The duty model and resources used is not the same across the three units.

## Response - How effective is the Service in the East SDA at responding to incidents when they do occur?

42. **An effective fire and rescue service will, when the public calls for help, ensure its firefighters respond promptly and possess the right skills, knowledge and equipment to deal with the incident effectively. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness within the East SDA is judged to be Satisfactory.**
43. There is an Operations Control (OC) based in Edinburgh, one of three covering Scotland, which is responsible for handling emergency calls in the East. Although the East OC will handle the majority of the calls for the area it is also possible for the other two OCs to handle East calls for resilience purposes. Currently the three OCs use different mobilising systems, the Service was in the process of introducing a single mobilising system which had been expected to make it easier for the three OCs to manage each other's calls. However, during our fieldwork, following extensive delays and problems with delivering the new system, the contract with the supplier was terminated. HM Chief Inspector initiated an inspection to consider the operational consequences of this decision.<sup>2</sup>
44. Call handling times are reported nationally. As at the end of the reporting year 2021-22 the median time for the East was 1.27 minutes which is comparable to the West SDA's time of 1.25 minutes. Although based within the East SDA the DACO has no direct control over the OC, as it forms part of the operations function within the SFRS's management structure. We are aware that there are staffing shortages in the East OC similar to other operational areas of the Service. During the fieldwork period of inspection there was a recruitment campaign for OC staff.
45. There have been no national standards by which to measure speed and weight of response since the removal of the standards of fire cover in 2005. The median response time to attend an incident, 8.40 minutes, within the East SDA is broadly in line with the other two Service Delivery Areas.
46. The ability to promptly respond is dependent on the availability of a crew to do so. This is usually directly related to the crewing model at the station closest to the incident. Within the East SDA there are two basic crewing models, Wholetime (including day crewing) and On-Call (which is new nomenclature for the retained and volunteer duty systems). Wholetime stations are crewed by full-time firefighters working a five-watch duty system. On-Call stations work on an as required basis, where personnel respond to a pager alert and attend the station when requested: this therefore builds in a delay before the appliance can leave the station.
47. Similar to other areas across Scotland and the wider UK there are occasions, particularly during the day, when an On-Call appliance may not be available. There are a number of factors which influence On-Call availability and the trend in recent years of people no longer working within their local communities continues to impact on personnel's ability to respond. The total average On-Call availability within the East was just over 70% for the year ending 31 March 2022. Generally, availability has reduced since its peak during the pandemic. It should be noted however that there are a number of stations in the East where the availability is very good and the personnel at these stations should be commended. It should also be noted that availability is usually higher during the night and at weekends.

48. The Service monitors the availability of On-Call appliances electronically. On-Call personnel individually use a system to manage their own availability. At a number of On-Call fire stations personnel will also informally, collectively manage their personal availability, to ensure that an appliance will remain available. Once the number of personnel available falls below the minimum number, with the correct skill set required to crew an appliance, it will be deemed unavailable and as such would not be mobilised to an incident. In these circumstances the next nearest available appliance would be mobilised. Within one area of the East we were made aware of a pilot project to improve On-Call appliance availability, the Bank Hours pilot. Within the pilot area On-Call staff have the ability to move around the area, away from their normal home station, providing cover in other areas and therefore maintaining overall appliance availability.

**Good Practice 1**



We feel there is scope, budget permitting, to extend the Bank Hours pilot beyond the initial area following the evaluation of its success.

49. A Wholetime fire station's establishment is based on the Service's crewing level policy. In practice there are occasionally times 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 ten-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. To ensure the duty system and Wholetime firefighter availability operates effectively, the SFRS has a national Central Staffing section, which has recently undergone a restructure. Central Staffing is responsible for arranging the number of firefighters on duty at each Wholetime fire station. This is done by the management of leave, controlled use of overtime, the use of the additional out-of-pattern roster reserve days (known as 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. Some watches we met with said that there was overtime 'fatigue', where staff were routinely declining the opportunity to work overtime.

50. The Service has an appliance withdrawal strategy. Due to the shortage of personnel there has been daily withdrawal of appliances in some areas in the East, normally the second pump at an affected station. The crew from that appliance will then be detached to make up the numbers at other stations. Due to the specialist rescue capabilities, and crewing requirements of some stations, it means that those stations don't form part of the withdrawal strategy and are broadly unaffected. This however places an added burden on other surrounding stations. Although not as a result of the impact of detached duties, we have been advised of specialist resources being unavailable due to crew shortages.

51. Prior to the pandemic, appliances in stations with two pumps were crewed to a minimum of five firefighters on the first appliance and four on the second. In response to the pandemic, crewing was reduced to a minimum of four and four. At the time of our inspection this reduction in crewing remains in place.

52. Detached duties and appliance withdrawal has been a major issue and source of frustration and low morale for the personnel affected. As they are often at short notice, detached duties can also have a negative impact on priority pre-arranged events, like training and other duties such as community safety work.
53. Last-minute crewing shortages due to sickness is understandable, and during the pandemic there were higher levels of sickness in the Service, but when pumps are being withdrawn daily it would suggest that crewing shortages are actually more predictable, with the possibility of giving personnel more notice of withdrawals. The short notice detached duty process involves personnel having to transport their own Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the other station which causes problems, if a person does not have their own transport, or they cycle or walk to work.
54. In very simplistic terms, the shortage of staff is the cause of the withdrawal of appliances. However, the solution is not as simple as just recruiting more firefighters, particularly at a time of constrained budgets. Staff costs represent just over 80% of the cost of providing the fire and rescue service. The Service has an overall Target Operating Model (TOM) that details how many staff it requires, in what roles and where, in order to crew and provide managerial and incident command support for all operational appliances. Currently the TOM is under-resourced and therefore the Service is experiencing difficulty trying to operate the five-watch duty system as intended. The Service has previously undertaken a review of its appliance withdrawal strategy. We believe that another assessment should now be carried out of the strategy and of the TOM, and conclusions drawn on the impact on firefighter and community safety.
55. We have highlighted in previous local area inspection reports, dissatisfaction with the central operation of the five-watch duty system. We were advised of occasions when crew members have been brought in on their Orange days when there was not a shortfall in staffing, and they were not required. We were also advised of Orange days being predominantly used towards the beginning of the year, rather than spread throughout it. Generally staff felt that if there was more local control of staffing requirements, it would help. However, this function being centralised does give the advantage of a wider overview of staffing needs and the ability to move staff where required.
56. Central Staffing are aware of these issues, but fundamentally the problems with the operation of the five-watch duty system are caused by trying to operate with reduced numbers of personnel below the TOM.
57. As indicated earlier, there are staff shortages at some On-Call stations in the East and action is being taken in a number of local areas to address this, where possible through ongoing recruitment. We cover recruitment in more detail later in the report.

### Recommendation 1



We recommend that the Service conducts a review of its staffing strategy and how it relates to the current under-resourced Target Operating Model.

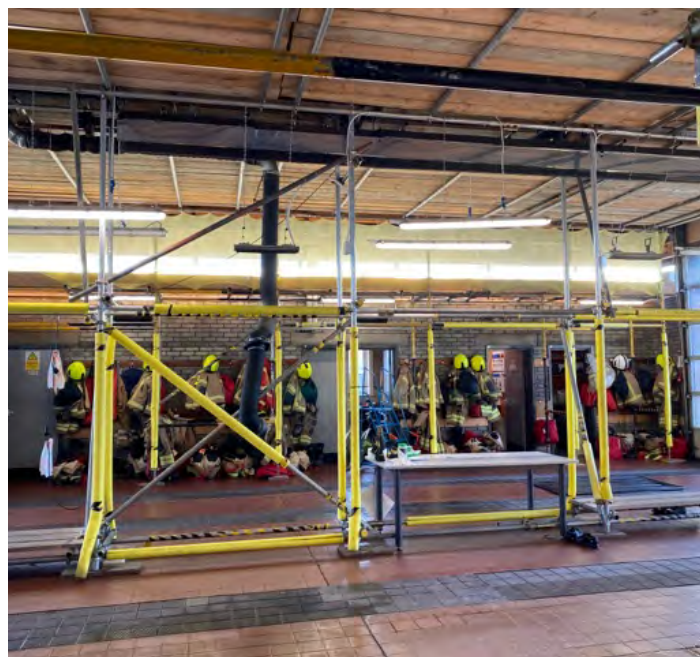
**Fire Stations**

58. The Service nationally has had a property condition survey carried out on each fire station in the East. The surveys give SFRS’s property managers information regarding the assessed condition of the fabric and services of the building, and to a degree, indicative costs for any identified refurbishment. This information generally allows property managers to prioritise improvement work.


59. Capital and resource expenditure priorities on premises refurbishment and repair is a national matter, in consultation with LSO area staff.

60. Eight of the fire stations within the East SDA have roof areas constructed of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). RAAC was used extensively in the construction of flat-roofed schools and similar buildings from the 1960s to the 1980s. A safety alert was issued in 2019 following the failure of a roof constructed of this material. The SFRS has undertaken a risk assessment and where necessary remedial action to provide temporary structural support for the affected roofs. Overall, the situation with the roofs of the affected stations will have a significant financial impact for the Service, beyond that already spent on temporary support and investigation work. For some stations this will require an in-depth assessment of the cost/benefit of repairing the roof, against replacing the whole building. Prioritisation of which stations will be remediated first, and how, is a national decision and is obviously dependent on access to capital funding. It is therefore unclear how long it will take to remedy the defects within the East SDA. Until such time as a solution is decided for the stations affected, there is a significant ongoing cost for scaffolding support and monitoring inspections.

61. As can be seen in the images, the working environment for the staff at some of these stations is also less than ideal, and this has been the case for a number of years. For example, in addition to having to work around the scaffolding supports, already leaking roofs have not been fully repaired and water ingress is still a problem at some stations. Although the Service has developed a Strategic Asset Management Plan, which broadly sets out the Service’s intentions for addressing the defects, it is of concern that this has not progressed further since the SFRS Board were first made aware in December 2019.



**Recommendation 2**



We recommend that the Service resolves the roofing problems at the affected fire stations as a matter of urgency.



62. A small number of stations in the East have had refurbishment work undertaken to provide more suitable dignified facilities for staff, which is to be welcomed. Some of the stations we visited had had work carried out to install solar panels and improve heating systems, as part of the Service's drive to reduce its 'carbon footprint'. However, a consequence of this work has been the loss of local control over heating systems which, for some stations, has had an impact on the ease of drying wet PPE.

63. A number of the On-Call stations are small, with limited facilities. This can impact the storage and care of PPE, the provision of suitable dignified facilities for firefighters and affects the general working environment for crews. Resolving these issues is again closely tied into the availability and prioritisation of capital funding.

### **Appliances**

64. The SFRS's national fleet function manages the procurement and servicing of vehicles used within the area, allocating and replacing vehicles on the basis of a national policy. The appliances allocated to the area are of a varying age and are generally being kept in good condition. Although, there were instances where, due to either age or configuration, appliances, including spare appliances, were in a less than satisfactory condition. In particular we were made aware of issues regarding the reliability, due to age, of the water bowser. Given the projected rise in the scale of wildfires, and the consequent increased demand on specialist resources, such as the water bowser, concern was expressed to us that it is not a priority for replacement. At the time of our thematic inspection of fleet in 2019 the bowser was listed in a SFRS capital backlog report, we are advised that work is progressing at present to replace the aging fleet of water carriers with demountable solutions. However, there has been recent investment within the East, for example, two new high reach vehicles were allocated to the City of Edinburgh during 2021-22. Overall we are advised there has been a reduction in the average age of the fleet in the East.

65. Major servicing of East appliances is undertaken at the Newbridge workshops managed by the Service's Fleet function. In 2019 HMFSI published a report of an Inspection of the SFRS's Management of its Fleet and Equipment Function<sup>3</sup>. In that report we highlighted that recruitment of mechanics was proving difficult, that situation persists at Newbridge workshops, which has an impact on the throughput of work. We were advised that there could be opportunities to achieve efficiencies through changes to work processes. Such as enabling On-Call mechanics to record their activity through the use of mobile devices whilst away from the workshop. Thereby freeing up time to maintain vehicles when they return, rather than having to catch-up with record keeping as they currently have to.

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3 HMFSI: The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's Management of its Fleet and Equipment Function, 2019

66. An issue that was raised with us on a number of occasions, regarding newer appliances, related to the stowage of Breathing Apparatus (BA) sets in a transverse locker. The dimension of the locker was said to be too narrow to stow the BA sets without parts of the set catching on the locker door surround, leading to damage of the set or locker edge seal. When procuring new appliances, the manufacturers are made aware what BA set the Service uses and therefore the dimensions of the locker should be sized accordingly. The situation described, suggests that there is an issue with the vehicle build acceptance process. We are aware that on some of the most recent appliances, there has been a retrofitting of a piece of fabric material designed to hold the BA set away from the locker edges, to avoid damage.
67. We are aware that User Intelligence Groups are set-up as part of the procurement process, however, there was generally said to be no consultation or feedback given to end-users of the appliances or equipment when new vehicles are brought into service. This was also an issue that we raised in our inspection of Fleet and Equipment and continues to be a source of frustration for staff.

### Equipment

68. With some exceptions described below, personnel are generally satisfied about the level and quality of operational equipment supplied.
69. 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 used in the ESDA is predominantly paper-based, with some stations recently receiving new document folders to hold the recorded information. The Service has introduced as a pilot, for water rescue resources, an electronic system based on a mobile phone application to record standard testing. We were made aware that there have been problems accessing the system on occasions.
70. In three locations we were shown an electronic, instead of paper-based, record keeping system, using an Excel Spreadsheet format, for the testing of equipment. The Excel recording process had been developed by the individual station's management and we were advised that completing the information electronically was quicker and better than manually filling in records. We believe that the Service should standardise the recording of equipment testing with a national electronic system as soon as possible or expand the use of the Excel based method.

### Recommendation 3



The Service should standardise its recording of standard tests taking cognisance of the electronic innovations already in use.

71. There are specialist rescue capabilities, such as water and rope rescue, based at a number of stations within the East SDA. The disposition of these resources is decided nationally and designed to give communities across Scotland equitable access. Some of the capability, such as USAR, was introduced across the UK following the terrorist attacks in the USA in 2001. Some of the equipment introduced then, such as mass decontamination, was said to be at the end of its useful operation due to wear and tear.
72. The BA set used by firefighters, which was first issued by the SFRS in 2016, was described by many of those we interviewed as being overly complex to operate and maintain and prone to defects. This particular issue was not subject to examination or inspection by ourselves as part of this inspection. As such we present this as a commonly held perception which we believe deserves further consideration by the SFRS. We were also made aware of a shortage of spare cylinders in some areas; this was said to impact on training, particularly in more remote areas, as crews are keeping charged cylinders available for operational use and there is limited access to cylinder charging compressors. A BA van, based at a station in Edinburgh, is used to transport replacement cylinders when required. Due to a lack of personnel within the Edinburgh area, this vehicle is now frequently unavailable, which is also having an impact on cylinder availability. In some areas fire appliances are being used to move cylinders, we would ask the Service to consider the economic and environmental impact of such an approach and aim to introduce a more suitable solution.
73. A consistent finding in our past inspection reports is the poor opinion that firefighters have of the fire-ground radios and the number of radios available. This continues to be the case. We are aware that the SFRS has plans to replace the current radios with a new digital format. At the time of our fieldwork the project had been running for several years and we were unsighted on its development. At the time of writing, we now understand that a contract for new radios has recently been awarded. We welcome this news; however, given the impact that this is having across all areas of operational response, we would urge the Service to complete the roll-out of this new equipment as a priority.
74. A frequent comment made by crews was that the provided structural fire PPE was good, but not practical for use at wildfire incidents. The structural PPE can cause the wearer to overheat when working over rough terrain. It was felt that lighter weight wildfire PPE was more appropriate. Some crew members had access to legacy Service-issued lightweight PPE which could be used at a wildfire; however, this PPE was not available to everyone, creating a mix of types and standards of PPE at this type of incident. The Service has plans to issue wildfire PPE to personnel at designated wildfire stations. However, given the scale of the response required to the wildfires during 2022 this will still result in most firefighters having to respond to incidents wearing PPE that is not ideally suited to that type of incident. We recognise that beyond the cost implications of providing all personnel with wildfire PPE there would be other practical difficulties such as those related to a lack of storage for these garments.
75. Although not related to the response function, members of the Service's community engagement staff reported a lack of suitable wet weather PPE and for some, particularly Community Safety Advocates, a lack of drill ground PPE when participating in youth fire skills courses.
76. We were advised of the difficulties experienced at some stations augmenting or changing the standard equipment provided on appliances, even when there was an identified local need. Whilst there are clear benefits in having a standard inventory, we are of the view that as risk is not standard across the country, there will be times when non-standard equipment is required, and local operational needs must receive clear recognition.
77. We were made aware of On-Call appliances, based at Wholetime stations, not receiving equipment on the basis that a Wholetime pump based at the same station has the equipment in question. This situation fails to recognise that the Wholetime appliance may not be available, or may be in attendance at another incident, leaving the On-Call appliance to have to 'make up' for the equipment not carried, such as a thermal imaging camera, leading to a possible delay.

78. In the reporting year 2021-22 the Service in the East attended 1,497 incidents of effecting entry or exit. Equipment regularly cited as being of use at these incidents, but not usually available, was specialised door opening equipment. It was felt by crews that being able to use this equipment would be more effective, by removing the lock, and cause less damage than the Service-provided door entry breaking-in equipment.

79. We were made aware of limited instances where there had been an exceptionally long delay in getting equipment repaired or replaced.

### Operational Intelligence (OI)

80. 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 tablet device within the cab of the fire appliance.

81. The provision of up-to-date and accurate information to its firefighters is important in effectively responding to incidents when they occur. We saw varying quantities of available information across the LSO areas. There are processes in place for firefighters to collect OI; however, we noted that in areas covered by On-Call appliances, firefighters from those stations are less likely to be involved in the collection process.

82. We are also aware of continued ongoing issues with the automatic up-dating of the Getac tablet device. This is a national problem and one that the Service has been trying to resolve. Until the situation is finally resolved, firefighters may not have access to the latest risk information. In 2019 HMFSI published a Thematic Inspection report<sup>4</sup> of the management and provision of risk information. In that report we highlighted that there were issues regarding the updating of the information on the tablet. We are disappointed that these issues have not been resolved and it is of concern that firefighters may not have ready access to the most up-to-date information.

83. Notwithstanding the issues of updating the tablet we found that, in general, the device was underutilised by firefighters mainly due to the problems associated with using it, which we also highlighted in our 2019 report. We found that the tablet is mostly being used for its map capability to locate hydrants rather than for its OI content. The mapping function does not however have traditional 'Sat Nav' capability to plot a route to the incident. Although it does have a 'follow me' function, which is reported as being of little use. Crews tend to use their own personal mobile phones for plotting a route to a location, as Service provided appliance mobile phones cannot access mapping systems. Towards the end of our fieldwork stage, the Service started to issue new mobile phones for appliances which did have data access. We see this as an improvement; however, it is still very disappointing that the tablet has not been developed to its full capability given the considerable investment in the technology.

### Recommendation 4



It is of concern that there are still issues with the reliability and functionality of the Getac tablet which may result in firefighters not having access to up-to-date risk information at time of need. Action should be taken as soon as possible to resolve the technical issues with the system.

<sup>4</sup> HMFSI: The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's arrangements for the provision of Operational Risk Information, 2019

**Training and exercising**

84. Pre-pandemic the Service would routinely train and exercise with multi-agency partners. Within the East SDA there are a number of significant risks, such as the Grangemouth Petrochemicals complex. Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) regulations require site operators to test emergency plans and the SFRS routinely participates in these tests where appropriate. Also, within the East is Torness Nuclear Power Station, which is also required to test emergency plans. The response to the pandemic did have a negative impact on the ability to train and exercise; however, with the removal of the restrictions this activity is slowly returning to normality.
85. In areas of the East SDA, On-Call stations are 'paired up' with Wholetime stations for the purposes of joint training which had also been interrupted by the pandemic. The joint training was said to work well pre-Covid. Following removal of covid restrictions there is an expectation that joint training will resume.
86. Use is also made of off-station venues for training, for example disused buildings for BA search and rescue training. Prior to use being made of these sites a risk assessment must be completed for the venue. A change in the risk assessment process had taken place within one LSO area within the East and this new process was said to have resulted in lengthy delays in getting to use some venues, which was a source of frustration for crews.
87. Some fire stations within the East SDA also respond to incidents over the English Border. Arrangements are in place for the exchange of relevant information when working together with Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service. Joint working arrangements are also exercised. The arrangements were said to work well.
88. Acquisition and maintenance of skills by personnel is covered later in this report under the people function.

# Partnership - How effective is the Service in the East SDA at working in partnership with others to improve community safety outcomes?

89. **An effective fire and rescue service will work in partnership with communities and others in the public, private and third sectors to ensure community wellbeing and to improve community safety outcomes. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness within the East SDA is judged to be good.**
90. The main purpose of the SFRS, as defined by the Scottish Government in the Fire and Rescue Framework 2022, 'is to work in partnership with communities and others in the public, private and third sectors, on prevention, protection and response, to improve the safety and wellbeing of people throughout Scotland.' We have witnessed a great deal of work being carried out in partnership. As can be expected the response to the pandemic did impact on some of the partnership activity being undertaken, particularly face-to-face prevention work. Re-engagement activity was being undertaken with partners to promote an increase in joint prevention working.
91. There is a legislative requirement of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for community planning partners to jointly develop a local plan aimed at improving the quality of life for the people experiencing the greatest inequality. There is evidence that the Service is complying with its statutory duty to work with others within the established community planning arrangements, particularly at a locality level. An area where the Service could assist with improving this work overall is how it prepares its managers to work at a strategic level with partners. SFRS managers can often inherit a role with little to no handover or previous experience of operating, at the strategic level, with Community Planning Partners. This was seen by some partners as a barrier. Particularly as there requires to be a shared ownership and vision of what the partnership priorities and goals are. If officers were given an early grounding centrally, perhaps as part of an officer development process, in how community planning operates and how the Service is expected to fit into that process, this could enhance the contribution that the SFRS already makes.
92. As already highlighted, the SFRS in the East SDA works in partnership with others to assess risk within the community, produces plans and makes preparation to respond to emergencies when required.
93. There are examples of co-location of emergency responder services within the East SDA. Ambulance crews from the Scottish Ambulance Service operate out of a number of stations across the East. To a limited extent officers from Police Scotland use fire stations as a temporary base, primarily in rural areas. There are also examples of other responders, such as HM Coastguard and mountain rescue organisations using fire stations in the East. Some partners we spoke to were keen to explore further asset-sharing opportunities where appropriate.
94. There are a number of examples of SFRS prevention staff participating in multi-agency partnership meetings, to discuss information sharing and design interventions, to improve community outcomes. There are also established referral pathways to allow the SFRS and its partners to share details when there are concerns regarding vulnerable persons. Staff have an awareness of issues beyond the home safety agenda, such as financial harm, human trafficking and domestic abuse.

95. The SFRS maintains, on behalf of multi-agency partners, a register of community based assets, the Community Asset Register (CAR). The development of the CAR was an outcome of a recommendation from an independent review of water rescue capability in Scotland, carried out by Paddy Tomkins QPM in 2009. The assets listed on the register are available to the SFRS and partners, on request, in order to provide assistance to the Service at an incident. Although launched by the SFRS in October 2017, we found that there was limited awareness amongst officers of what resources were available on the CAR. This lack of awareness will clearly impact the use made of resources, the details of which are held on the CAR. OC staff had a working knowledge of the CAR and were able to confirm that it is infrequently used. Although aware of the CAR, OC staff described a reluctance to suggest to Incident Commanders resources which may be available, as the Incident Commanders are 'in charge' of the incident and OC staff felt this would be going beyond their remit.
96. The view was also expressed to us that SFRS is not best placed to host the CAR and it would be beneficial if it were provided and managed by a government-based organisation.

**Recommendation 5**

As we recommended in our inspection report on command and control, we continue to suggest that more could be done to promote the existence of the CAR, and to encourage the use of assets contained on the list, where appropriate.

# People - How effective is the Service in the East SDA at managing and supporting its workforce?

97. **An effective fire and rescue service recruits, develops and maintains a workforce that is skilled, supported and reflects the diversity of its communities. Its managers promote a culture of fairness and respect. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness within the East SDA is judged to present opportunity for improvement.**

## Workforce Planning

98. As would be expected as a national service, many of the systems, policies and procedures are defined centrally. How the Service manages its people is no different. The Target Operating Model for the number of personnel in the East SDA, as at the end of March 2022, was 1,631. The actual (fulltime equivalent) number of staff was 1,427. The number of vacancies varies across the LSO areas and within roles.

99. Turnover of staff within the Wholetime workforce is normally less frequent and more predictable than with staff of other duty systems. The projected turnover in Wholetime staff over the 12 months to March 2023 was 8.6% and 8.1% for On-Call staff. Consequently, under normal circumstances, the Service is more able to forecast staffing changes and has more control over the need for recruitment. However, the recent unpredicted change made to the firefighters' pension scheme, mentioned earlier, resulted in a sudden spike of retirements of eligible firefighters. This has had an impact on workforce planning. There has also been the consequential loss of very experienced officers. There are a number of staff in temporary promoted roles, some of whom have been 'acting up' for some time. Locally there are a number of vacancies at On-Call stations. The Service has centrally created a staffing solutions team. The stated purpose of the staffing solutions team is to maximise the SFRS's attraction, recruitment, retention and development of operational personnel to maintain the respective TOM.

100. Succession planning is an integral part of workforce planning, ensuring that there is a developed workforce able to replace others who are promoted and those that leave or retire. The SFRS has a centrally managed and established promotion, selection and development programme. We cover this further under developing leaders.

## Recruitment

101. Wholetime and On-Call recruitment is broadly managed centrally. The Service provides prospective applicants with background information on what the process entails, such as details of the medical, fitness tests, psychometric test, practical examination and selection centre. Applying for vacancies can be done online.

102. For applicants interested in becoming On-Call firefighters there is now a Pre-Recruitment Engagement Programme (PREP). Once an application has been registered, personnel from the relevant local station will support the applicant in preparations to undertake the fitness and practical selection tests for On-Call firefighters. We heard first hand from some prospective members of the On-Call who were participating in PREP and who felt the process had been of benefit. We welcome this development.

### Good Practice 2



We welcome the introduction of the Pre-Recruitment Engagement Programme (PREP) process and we have witnessed first-hand during our fieldwork the value of it.

103. As highlighted above, there are a number of On-Call vacancies at a number of stations, consequently there are continuous open recruitment campaigns running where necessary. We were made aware of locally prepared social media promotional material for the On-Call system and thought it a useful way to increase public recognition and promote recruitment opportunities.



104. There would appear to be some continuing issues around the length of time taken to complete the initial recruitment process for On-Call. Although we were told, latterly in our inspection programme, of some areas where there had been a significant improvement, we were also told of occasions where it had taken up to a year, leading to some applicants losing interest and withdrawing. The SFRS should continue to focus on this aspect of recruitment, building on the successes that had been experienced latterly.

### Training

105. Wholetime trainees attend a three-month course at a SFRS training centre. Following graduation from this course trainees then go into a development phase, where they are given three further assessments. Due to recent increased numbers of trainees, there are challenges in supporting and assessing their development phase which is proving resource intensive in some areas. We encountered trainees who had completed their development plans but could not be signed off as being competent firefighters, due to a lack of Assessors and Verifiers nationally to approve these plans. The Service is aware of this issue and is actively working to increase Assessor/Verifier numbers.

106. An issue that was raised with us by local trainers was a lack of access to a trainees end of initial course note, following their three-month course. This note would highlight any areas that should be an initial focus for further development by local training teams or watch management teams when they arrive on station.

107. Initial training for an On-Call firefighter is to attend a two-week task and task management course, followed by a further two weeks at a later date. The initial training for On-Call staff can be a barrier, as four weeks of training can use up all their leave entitlement or force them to use un-paid leave from their primary employer, if they have one. The Service is actively looking at improving the recruitment and initial training experience for On-Call firefighters through its national On-Call improvement programme. We encountered some good examples of this training being split over consecutive weekends to alleviate these issues, making the training package more accessible to the trainee and soften primary employment issues. The SFRS should maintain a focus on, and further enhance, this work.

108. The SFRS made a substantial change to its ongoing, or maintenance phase development planner (MPDP), training programme for firefighters in April 2022. Prior to that, ongoing training of operational staff included a competence framework containing a number of modules to be undertaken by staff. There were:

- 12 core skills modules to be completed over 12 months
- 12 standard modules to be covered over 36 months
- 24 (max) advanced modules tailored to each station risk profile, to be covered over 36 months

109. Continuous training is delivered using an e-learning system known as the Learning Content Management System (LCMS), which uses videos and online questions and answers to support and assess staff competencies. We have previously commented in a number of reports that the training packages were not entirely conducive to learning. As mentioned above, from April 2022 a change was made to ongoing training, some of the former modules have been combined to create a single topic, reducing the number of standard and advanced down from 36 modules to 24. The content of the modules has also been improved, with more of a focus on 'need to know' information for maintenance phase staff, rather than 'nice to know'. The changes implemented have been widely welcomed by staff. Notwithstanding the improvement in the LCMS packages, an issue, also raised by us in earlier inspections, is the restricted access, and perceived poor quality of computers particularly in On-Call fire stations. There is also a continuing demand for more 'hands-on' practical training, rather than computer-based.

110. Staff also receive some regular instructor led training, particularly On-Call staff. During the pandemic there was a move to provide this training virtually. On-Call stations were, in most cases, overwhelmingly positive of the support they receive from visiting training staff when this is possible.

111. The provision of training support is split between local training teams, who are part of the LSO's staff and a national training team, which is part of the Training, Safety and Assurance Directorate, who for the East, are based at the SFRS training centre at Newbridge, on the outskirts of Edinburgh. Following the creation of the SFRS there was a rationalisation of training venues, which led to the closure of the multi-functional training venue at Thornton in Fife, amongst other smaller scattered units. This closure was said to have had a big impact on the training facilities available to some stations in the East.
112. The national training team at Newbridge is responsible for delivering certain courses, such as the BA Refresher Programme, Fire Behaviour Training, Incident Command and Driver Training.
113. The training of drivers has been a subject of focus for the national team. In previous reports we have highlighted that there is a shortage of appliance drivers in a number of areas, this is a continuing problem. A review by the driver training team in 2020 highlighted that, across the Service, there was a shortage of 270 drivers at that time. The national team has been working with other 'Blue Light' partners to explore the potential to share some of the training burden. For example, Police Scotland driving instructors delivering SFRS officer response car driver training. The SFRS has also revised course delivery by moving from one-to-one training to two candidates per session for appliance driver training. It is hoped that this package of actions will improve the number of drivers available.
114. We are advised that there is currently a shortage of instructors at Newbridge, which is impacting on the ability to deliver courses as programmed, this has led to the cancellation of courses, sometimes at late notice. It was reported to us that a number of BA and fire behaviour training courses were impacted by these cancellations, which at the time of our visits had not been rescheduled. The instructor shortage also often results in members of local training teams being used to supplement the national instructor cadre, which consequently negatively impacts the local training that these instructors can deliver. We were also advised that the delivery of BA Instructor refresher courses had also been impacted.
115. A recent change to harmonise the national terms and conditions of training staff, in particular working hours, has also had an impact on training delivery. Local instructors are now required to carry out more national work. This is reported to reduce the local instructor hours available, one area estimated this to be as much as 1,400 instructor hours per year. There is also now a requirement for instructors to provide targeted availability to deliver courses at weekends where necessary. However, we are aware that there is a salary enhancement available for instructors carrying out this work.

### Recommendation 6



We have highlighted that there are problems with the resourcing of training, both locally and at the Newbridge national training centre, which has led to the cancellation of courses. We recommend that a review of training delivery in the East is undertaken with a view to improving training outcomes.

116. On-line refresher courses have been introduced for incident command level (ICL) 2 & 3. There was some criticism of the refresher training stating that it was more of a memory test than a learning experience. We were told the same when we conducted a Thematic Inspection of Command and Control published in 2020<sup>5</sup>.
117. A new process was introduced for the initial assessment of incident command competence during our fieldwork. The On Station Assessment of Incident Command Competence (OSAICC) process has been introduced as part of the Crew Commander promotion process. The OSAICC course is delivered online over three, three-hour sessions, followed by a practical incident command scenario. There were mixed views about this course, and we will maintain an interest as to how the process will develop in the future.

118. There are local training plans developed and kept under review which consider the skills, including specialisms, and capabilities required to effectively respond to the risks identified in the local areas.
119. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define competence as ‘the ability to undertake responsibilities and perform activities to a recognised standard on a regular basis. It combines practical and thinking skills, knowledge and experience.’ Once a firefighter has acquired a specific skill, maintenance of the skill is achieved using the quarterly MPDP modules mentioned earlier. Training standards define a further three-year cycle when skills are refreshed at a defined national training centre.
120. Operational readiness within the SFRS is measured across competence in Core Skills, Incident Command, Specialist Skills and Maintenance Phase Development Modules. Nationally the Service sets a compliance performance target of 95% for the workforce. Performance in the East is set out in the table, where a number of core and specialist skills can be seen to be below that target. We have highlighted elsewhere in this report that the delivery of training was impacted by the response to the pandemic, added to that, the under-resourcing of instructor capacity has also affected the ability to run courses.
121. The SFRS’s internal auditors recently undertook a review of training and published their report in February 2023. As part of the findings in that report the auditors concluded that competency rates in some core skills were below the performance target. The Internal Audit report concluded that there was an area of improvement to ‘address non-compliance with completion rates for mandatory refresher training. Where completion rates fall below target, measures should be put in place to ensure firefighters remain competent and have the skills required to perform their role.’ In response to findings within the audit report, the SFRS has indicated that the following is one of the actions that will be taken. ‘Training [Department] will develop a Skills Maintenance Framework that will clearly set out what is required within each skill set to ensure compliance. This will detail how skills will be assessed and what action will be taken should any personnel be deemed to be not yet competent or are out

with their refresher training currency periods. Training [Department] will review how training is recorded and reported to ensure that all training can be captured accurately as part of a wider review.’

	<b>Q3 2022-23</b>
<b>Core Skill</b>	<b>% Competence</b>
Breathing Apparatus Refresher	83
Compartment Fire Behaviour Refresher	81
Tactical Ventilation Refresher	64
Incident Command Level 1 Refresher	96
Emergency Response Driving Refresher	93
<b>Specialist Skills</b>	<b>% Competence</b>
Heavy Rescue	111
Urban Search & Rescue	27
Water Rescue	105
Rope Rescue	94
Mass Decontamination	124

\* Figures in excess of 100% are because more are trained than required for resilience

122. As stated earlier there are a number of specialist capabilities based in stations across the East. Consequently crews at these stations require to maintain additional specialist skills which can be challenging due to the shortage of personnel and appliances, as it is difficult to withdraw appliances for training purposes.
123. We have been advised of continuing local difficulties relating to training in USAR, borne out in the statistics above, as well as Water Rescue. This has been due to a lack of available national courses for USAR, and low water levels, coupled with restricted access to a bespoke water training venue in Glasgow, impacting on water rescue skills maintenance. There are also shortages of instructors with the necessary qualification in order to deliver this specialised training.

**Recommendation 7**

We have highlighted in this report and in others that there are problems in delivering USAR training, leading to the reported low levels of competency in this specialism. We would encourage the Service to review course delivery and resolve the issues identified as a matter of urgency.

124. There were also isolated examples of crews being unable to use some pieces of equipment because of a lack of training in its use.

125. We were advised that training for road traffic incidents involving vehicles was being partly frustrated by an instruction that crews were not allowed to practice techniques where the vehicle was on its roof or side. We understand this instruction was issued following damage to a piece of equipment at an earlier training session where the vehicle was to be placed off its four wheels. Following feedback from the Director of Training we understand that there has been no national direction issued regarding this practice. It would therefore appear to be locally derived. However, from whatever source of instruction this has the potential to lead to a situation where crews are being asked to respond to emergencies without adequate and realistic training on how to resolve these safely. We would therefore suggest that clarification should be given across the East on this matter.

**Developing leaders**

126. The Service nationally has processes to develop and assess staff deemed suitable for promotion. These include formalised assessment centres. During the period of our fieldwork a national promotion process was underway. An issue of particular concern for some officers was that, in their opinion, this national process was thought to be flawed. We were made aware of a number of officers, who had been successfully undertaking temporary promoted roles, some for a considerable period of time, but were later unsuccessful at gaining a permanent substantive post in the promotion round. During their temporary promotion the officers, and the Service, had invested in their development through the attendance on courses and gaining qualifications such as incident command. The officers felt that an individual's performance at an interview was not the best way to assess the candidate, particularly where they had already been undertaking the role. It was felt that performance during temporary promotion should also count towards an individual's suitability for permanent promotion.

127. Beyond the impact on the unsuccessful personnel, the turnover of commanders also has an impact on the personnel that they manage and the partners with whom they engage. A number of partners raised with us the cycle of change and the need to repeat the engagement with the Service on a regular basis. We appreciate that any promotion process must be transparent and fair. However, we feel that there may be other ways that this process could be managed whilst still maintaining the goal of fairness and equity.

128. The Service commenced a pilot project of a non-mandatory development pathway for officers and staff in December 2022. The project focuses on enhancing the leadership and management skills of participants at a supervisory and middle management level. We look forward to seeing an evaluation of the project in due course.

129. More generally, particularly due to the recent spike in retirements, handovers between officers and their successors have been limited or in some cases non-existent, if the officer has already left before their successor has been appointed. This lack of handover places an unnecessary delay in the replacement officer 'getting up to speed'.

### Managing performance

130. In our discussions with personnel across the East they generally reported a feeling of being supported by their immediate managers. An issue raised with us however was, for some stations, the frequent turnover of flexi-duty officers. This was a source of frustration as they felt that projects or issues concerning staff and stations were rarely seen through to a conclusion. Engagement with more senior managers was understandably less frequent, but this was not always viewed as a problem, although staff generally felt uninformed about significant projects, such as On-Call terms and conditions changes and the On-Call Improvement Programme project.

131. The SFRS has a procedure to manage performance through an annual appraisal process for all staff. In our experience from our station visits there is less of a focus on the process within the On-Call workforce.

### Equality and diversity

132. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Framework requires that the 'SFRS should also seek to be an organisation that is more representative of the people and communities that it serves.' As part of their continual training, firefighters complete a diversity training package. The SFRS has a mandatory Professional Behaviours and Equality online module which staff are required to complete on the LCMS platform. The module retains a three-year currency for personnel. It highlights the expectations and legal requirements of employees, relating to fulfilling their obligations for equality and diversity, along with what employees can expect from the SFRS in how it meets its obligations. The module also explains to employees' concepts of equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights and why these are relevant to their job.

133. 8.2% of the total number of SDA staff, including support staff, identify themselves as female. However, the breakdown varies across the different roles and duty systems. For example, for Wholetime firefighters the split is 92.4% male 7.6% female, for On-Call it is 92.9% male and 7.1% female, but for support staff it is 31.3% male and female 68.8%. Within the constituent local authority areas that make up the East SDA, as at the 2011 census, females make up an average of 51.5% of the local population.

134. 0.6% of SFRS staff identify themselves as an ethnic minority. Again, within the constituent local authorities, those from an ethnic minority background make up an average of 2.8% of the local population. Identifying how ethnically representative the workforce is of the local community is difficult, as recording of ethnicity is not mandatory and 41% of the East SDA staff haven't recorded their ethnic background, or prefer not to say.

135. Since 2018-19 the SFRS has been publishing demographic statistics for new entrants and as part of its recruitment process the Service nationally is trying to improve the diversity of its workforce by trying to attract currently underrepresented groups. Nationally the Service aspires to have a workforce which is representative of the people and communities of Scotland. The Service published a Positive Action Strategy in 2019, which is currently being refreshed, with the aim of promoting the SFRS as an Employer of Choice to Scotland's diverse communities, to attract, recruit and retain people from underrepresented groups.

### Recommendation 8



The Service should conclude the review and updating of its Positive Action Strategy and continue to promote the Service as an employer of choice in a bid to ensure the make-up of its workforce better reflects the communities it serves.

**Physical and Mental wellbeing**

136. Staff wellbeing is a priority of the SFRS and there is a range of support, for both physical and mental health available. Posters promoting the Service's mental health campaign were very visible at the stations we visited. Staff we spoke to were complimentary about the support that was available to them.
137. For those staff who may have concerns around bullying, harassment or discrimination, the Service have advisors that are an initial point of contact to discuss, in confidence, any issues.

138. Sickness absence within the East SDA has been reasonably static within most workforce duty bands as per the tables below. There are national policies for the management of sickness and helping to support staff in a return to work.
139. There are systems and processes in place for personnel to access support from occupational health professionals, through either self-referral or by being referred by the SFRS. Across the East SDA for the 12-month period to May 2022, there were 267 referral cases current. The most common reason for the referral was musculoskeletal injury, with work-related stress being the next most common.

**Wholetime**

Year	Average Days Lost Per Person	absence %
2019-2020	7.28	5.13
2020-2021	4.38	3.87
2021-2022	7.96	6.94
2022-2023	6.60	6.64

**Flexi**

Year	Average Days Lost Per Person	absence %
2019-2020	4.77	2.48
2020-2021	4.69	2.86
2021-2022	4.18	3.41
2022-2023	3.10	2.99

**On-Call**

Year	Average Days Lost Per Person	absence %
2019-2020	9.20	2.79
2020-2021	10.26	3.34
2021-2022	13.97	4.84
2022-2023	12.17	4.14

**Support**

Year	Average Days Lost Per Person	absence %
2019-2020	21.38	10.18
2020-2021	10.79	5.44
2021-2022	17.33	10.20
2022-2023	14.86	8.09

### Health and Safety

140. One of the Service's Core Values is 'Safety' and this is underpinned by a Safety and Assurance Strategy. The Service aims to promote a positive safety culture. There are national performance reporting and trend analysis for key indicators covering, for example, accident and near miss statistics. The view of staff we spoke to was that the new system, 'Think Act Stay Safe' (TASS), used for recording health and safety events and near misses was an improvement on the old one, but there were still times that the level of detail required was onerous. As can be seen in the following table, accident and injury numbers have declined over the last three reporting years and so have near misses. Though there is limited UK data available, nationally the reporting rate, per 1,000 employees, for near miss events within the SFRS is significantly lower than some other fire and rescue services in the UK. The SFRS should continue to promote the importance of reporting near misses in order to address any under-reporting. Near miss reporting is described by the Health and Safety Executive as a very important way of identifying problem areas.

#### Accident/Injury and Near Misses

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Total
Accident/Injury	54	48	39	141
Near Miss	76	49	48	173
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>314</b>

141. Regrettably, acts of violence against personnel have been increasing over the last three reporting years.

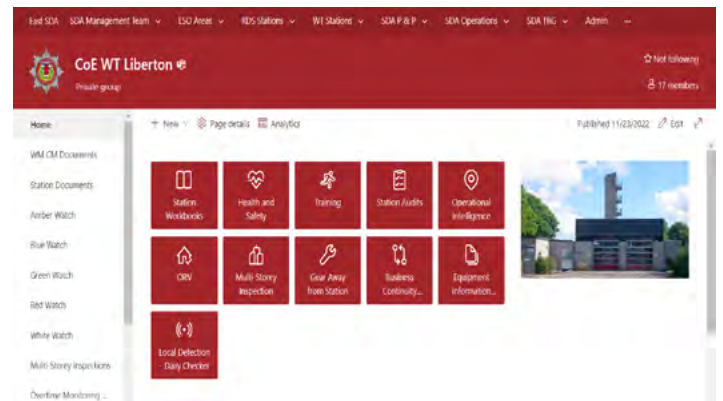
#### Acts Of Violence

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Total
Acts Of Violence	15	23	25	63


**Fire station management system**

142. As mentioned earlier, Wholetime personnel work the five-watch duty system, where firefighters work a recurring shift pattern of two ten-hour days, two fourteen-hour nights, followed by four days off. The SFRS’s five-watch duty system is based on a ten-week, continually repeating, shift cycle. In the ten-week cycle a typical firefighter would have seven periods of working two day shifts, two night shifts followed by four days off. At the end of the seven periods, the ten-week cycle is completed by firefighters being rostered off duty for eighteen days in a row. All annual leave is allocated within these eighteen-day break periods. On return from their eighteen days off, firefighters must catch up with any new information or changes introduced during their time off, which can sometimes be onerous. The LSO within the MELSB area has introduced a return from leave briefing for Wholetime personnel. These briefings are conducted via MS Teams and are attended by members of station watch management teams and the LSO Area management team, during which important information can be delivered in a single meeting session to be cascaded to remaining personnel.

143. Currently being rolled out across the East is a SharePoint information management site. On the site there is a page for each station and, for Wholetime stations, each watch within that station. The system is designed to make it much easier for station management teams to track information relating to various aspects of station operation. The system has not been designed by the Service’s ICT department but by uniformed and support staff within the East SDA. Inspectors were impressed with the ease with which information could be retrieved and disseminated and think there would be benefit in further roll out of the resource. The aim has been that information should be no more than ‘three clicks away’. The image below is a screenshot from the system.




**Good Practice 3**



The return from leave briefing is a useful method of updating personnel. If thought to be successful there could be scope for the briefing being rolled out across other LSO areas.

**Good Practice 4**



The SharePoint information management site is a valuable resource for station management teams and we think there would be benefit in it being rolled out across the other SDAs.



# Recommendations and good practice

**Recommendation 1** – We recommend that the Service conducts a review of its staffing strategy and how it relates to the current under-resourced Target Operating Model.

**Recommendation 2** – We recommend that the Service resolves the roofing problems at the affected fire stations as a matter of urgency.

**Recommendation 3** – The Service should standardise its recording of standard tests taking cognisance of the electronic innovations already in use.

**Recommendation 4** – It is of concern that there are still issues with the reliability and functionality of the Getac tablet which may result in firefighters not having access to up-to-date risk information at time of need. Action should be taken as soon as possible to resolve the technical issues with the system.

**Recommendation 5** – As we recommended in our inspection report on command and control, we continue to suggest that more could be done to promote the existence of the CAR, and to encourage the use of assets contained on the list, where appropriate.

**Recommendation 6** – We have highlighted that there are problems with the resourcing of training, both locally and at the Newbridge national training centre, which has led to the cancellation of courses. We recommend that a review of training delivery in the East is undertaken with a view to improving training outcomes.

**Recommendation 7** – We have highlighted in this report and in others that there are problems in delivering USAR training, leading to the reported low levels of competency in this specialism. We would encourage the Service to review course delivery and resolve the issues identified as a matter of urgency.

**Recommendation 8** – The Service should conclude the review and updating of its Positive Action Strategy and continue to promote the Service as an employer of choice in a bid to ensure the make-up of its workforce better reflects the communities it serves.

**Good Practice 1** – We feel there is scope, budget permitting, to extend the Bank Hours pilot beyond the initial area following the evaluation of its success.

**Good Practice 2** – We welcome the introduction of the Pre-Recruitment Engagement Programme (PREP) process and we have witnessed first-hand during our fieldwork the value of it.

**Good Practice 3** – The return from leave briefing is a useful method of updating personnel. If thought to be successful there could be scope for the briefing being rolled out across other LSO areas.

**Good Practice 4** – The SharePoint information management site is a valuable resource for station management teams and we think there would be benefit in it being rolled out across the other SDAs.

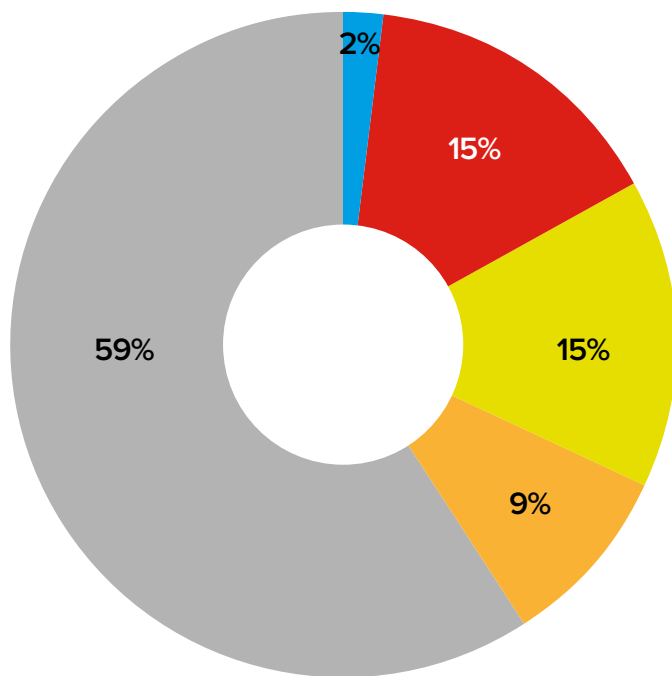
# Appendix A: Staff Survey Outcomes

## Overview

To support the SDA Inspection and enable wider engagement, we invited all staff in the ESDA to participate in an online survey.

Questions were centred to support the key themes of our inspection. The outcome is demonstrated within this appendix.

## Level of engagement



**Survey Respondents**

**323**  
personnel 

A total of 323 personnel within the **East SDA** responded to our survey. The percentage split of the staff group they represented can be seen in the chart.

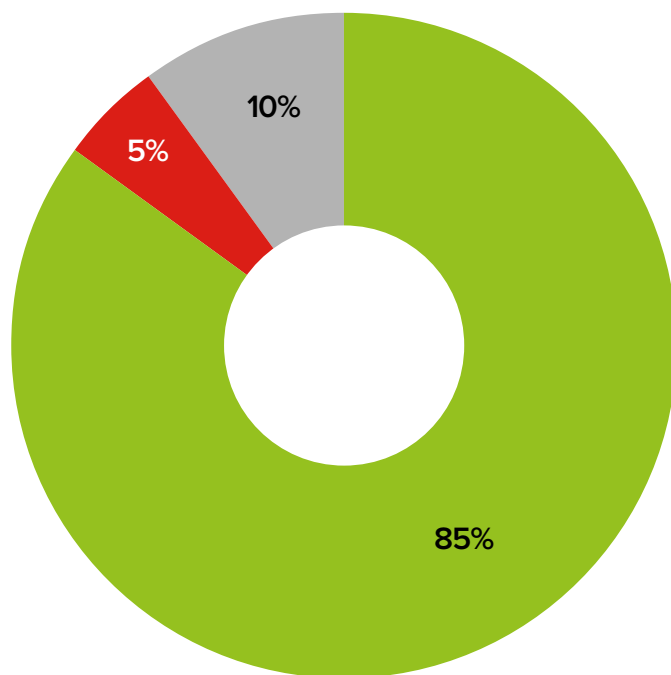
- On-Call (RVDS) – Operational Response
- Support Staff
- Flexi Duty Officer
- Wholetime – Operational Response
- Prefer not to say

As of 31 March 2022, 1,427 service delivery personnel were based in the East of Scotland. The survey returns received amount to 23% of this staff total.

During our fieldwork we engaged face to face with approximately 22% of ESDA staff.

## We asked...

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### Are you clear on your department's/team's priorities?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

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### Example Commentary:

“Too many shifting priorities that are poorly communicated and unclear.”

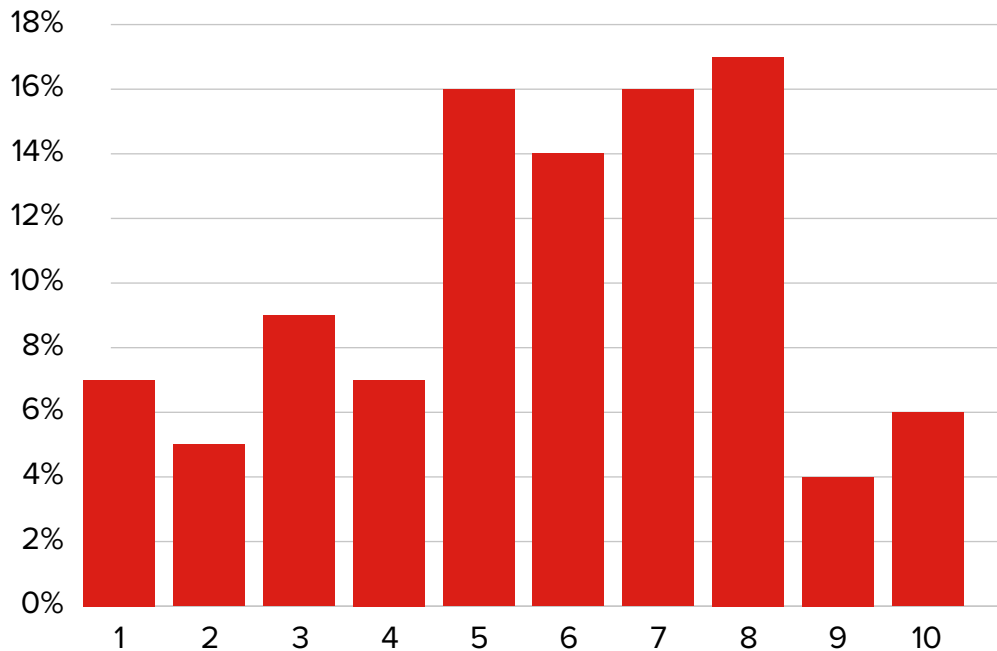
“I’m aware of my responsibilities within my role but feel that it lacks strategic direction.”

“Objectives are clear from Strategic Plan - Local LSO Plan - Station Plan – Appraisals.”

## We asked...

### How would you rate the premises you work in and the facilities available?

(ratings from 1 being poor to 10 being excellent)



# 63%

of respondents rated the standard of their facilities between 5 and 8.

### Example Commentary:

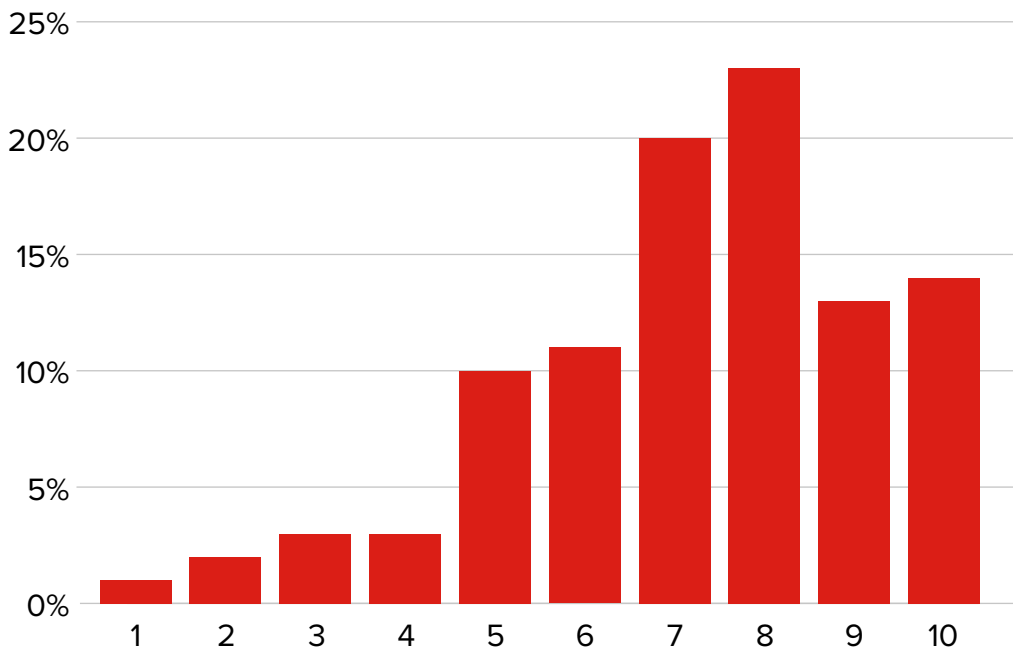
“The station I am based at has a large amount of scaffolding internally to support the roof: property defects are actioned quickly but the condition of the roof is worrying.”

“The station has been recently rewired and painted which was welcome. However, the internet capability and availability of PCs requires improvement. The amount of work/training which has to be carried out on PCs means that everyone can require to use one at the same time.”

“The premises that I work in are suitable for the job, but it would be good to have up-to-date facilities and better IT facilities.”

## We asked...

### How would you rate the equipment (if applicable PPE) you are provided with to do your work? (ratings from 1 being poor to 10 being excellent)



**91%**  
of respondents rated the standard of their equipment between 5 and 10.

### Example Commentary:

“Not sufficient number of radios (every crew member should have one). Every CABA team should have a TIC when entering a fire.”

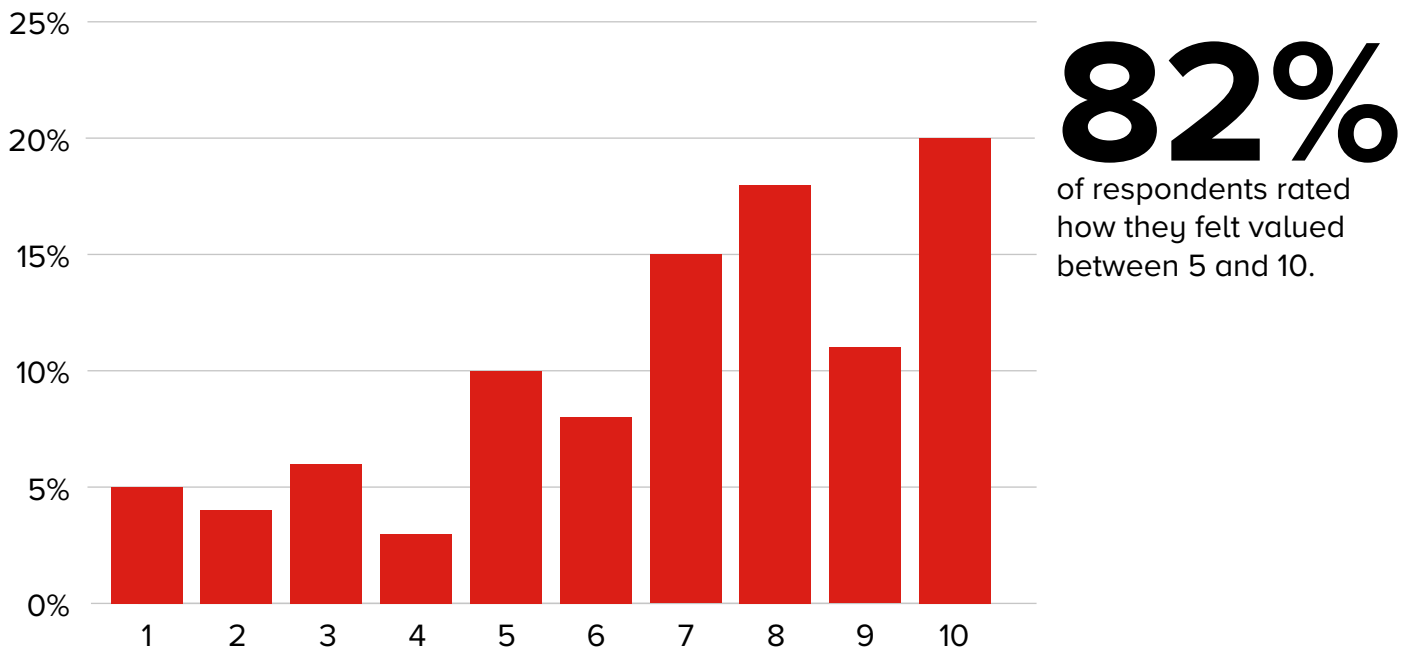
“Some equipment is good. Some bad. There needs to be more real consultation with the people using the equipment before purchasing. Some of the equipment we were using 15 years ago is better than what we are using now.”

“In general, the quality and functionality of our equipment is good. I’m aware of technological advances that would enhance safety and response, however, budgetary constraints prevent progress.”

## We asked...

### Do you feel valued and supported by the management team; how would you rate this?

(ratings from 1 being poor to 10 being excellent)



### Example Commentary:

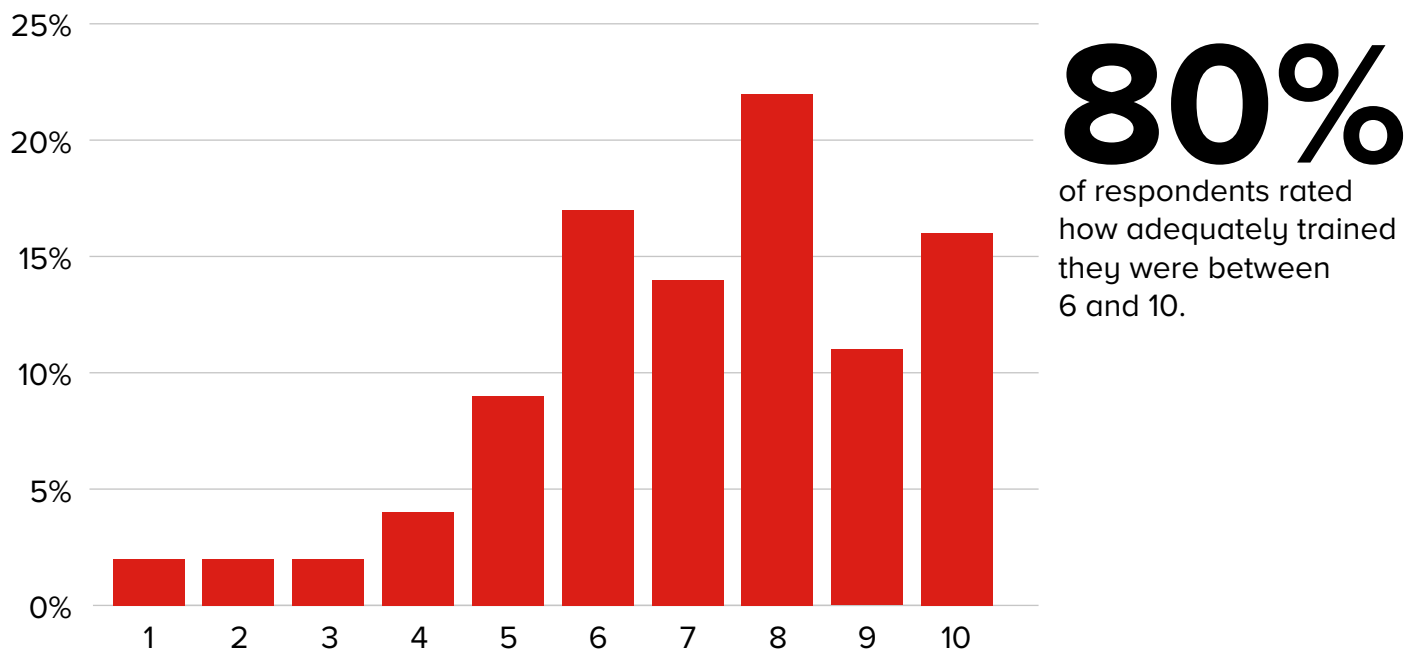
“Totally feel undervalued which has an impact on morale. Staff shortages mean that the workforce is at a low ebb, which devalues individuals’ sense of appreciation, which can have an impact on mental health.”

“I think the management team understand the issues staff are experiencing just now in the aftermath of the pandemic, but I don’t think these issues are at the forefront of their minds.”

“My managers are very supportive of our team and frequently check in with us regarding health issues as well as ensuring no-one is struggling with workloads.”

## We asked...

**Do you feel confident that you are adequately trained for your role; how would you rate this?**  
(ratings from 1 being poor to 10 being excellent)



### Example Commentary:

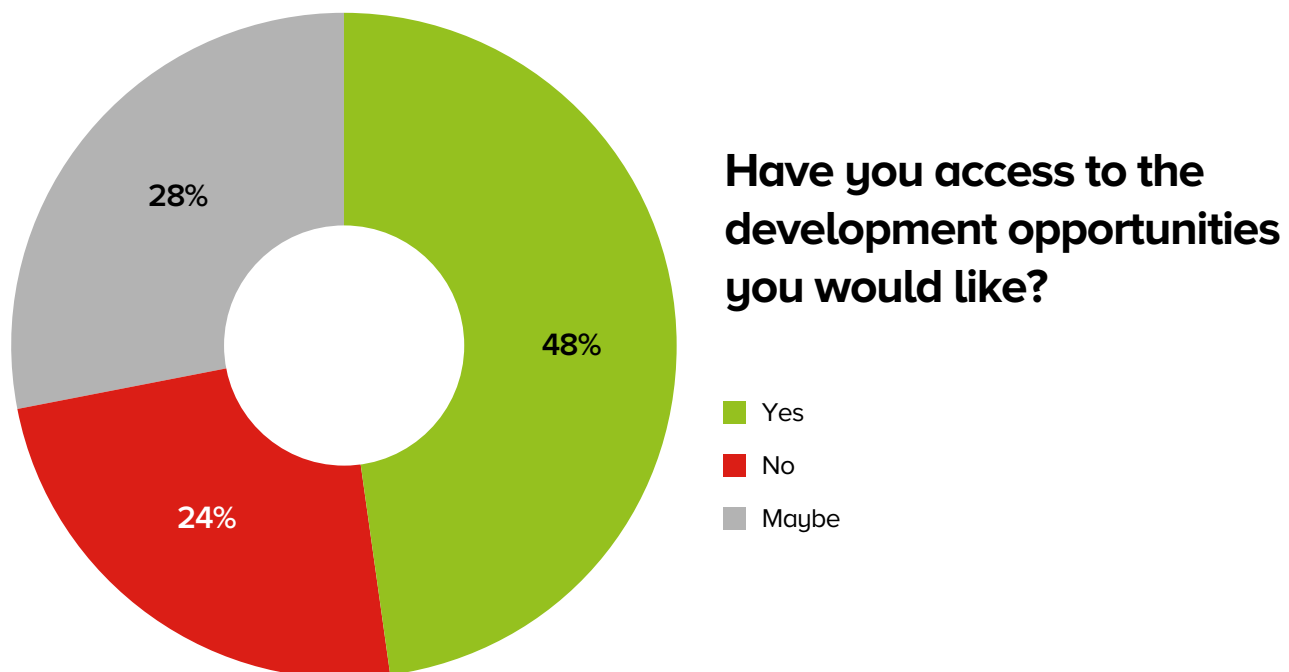
“Severe lack of practical training with a strong emphasis on online and e-learning which can feel pointless at times in a practical work/hands-on role. Any organised training events seem to be cancelled at the last minute due to staff shortages or individuals sent detached duties to another fire station therefore organised training can be missed.”

“Covid has had a big impact on the amount of training over the last few years with an increase in skill decay. Hopefully moving forward this can be addressed but again staff shortage and sickness is having a big impact on training being carried out.”

“I was offered and took part in various courses prior to moving into my current role, I have taken part in courses to further my development since being in role and opportunity is given regularly to further my personal development, not only by going on courses but also with opportunities presented to me within the role to widen my knowledge and understanding.”

## We asked...

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### Example Commentary:

“A more formal approach to preparing for the next role would be beneficial. This could be introduced in a career pathway and aligned to recognised qualifications. This process would identify and prepare the most appropriate candidates for the next role.”

“Not enough courses are run to supply demand. I believe strongly that we need development pathways for all roles. That way, when you are promoted, you already have the qualifications for the post, allowing you to settle into the job and not have to go on numerous courses, causing your job lists to build up causing anxiety and stress.”

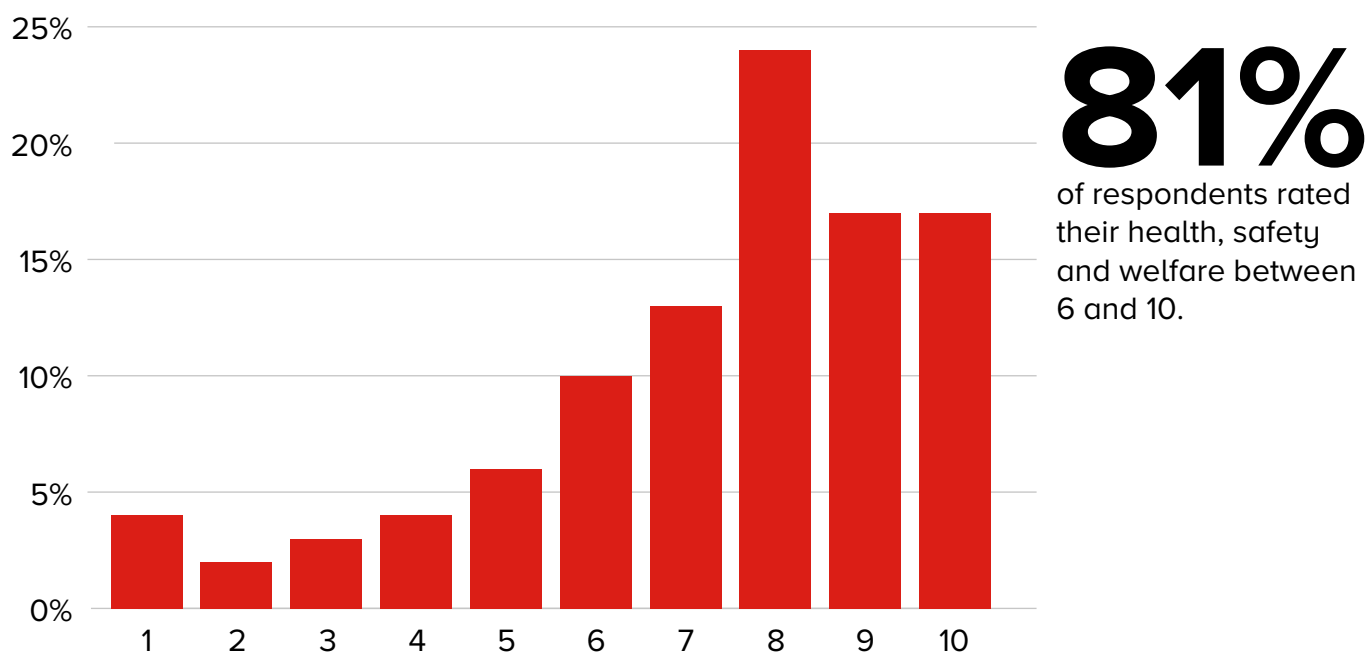
“As long as you are proactive then there are plenty opportunities for self-development.”



## We asked...

### Do you feel that your health, safety and welfare is suitably catered for; how would you rate this?

(ratings from 1 being poor to 10 being excellent)



### Example Commentary:

“If the SFRS really cared about my H&S they would not have me working in a station that is literally falling down and I would have regular and updated refresher training on risk critical aspects of my job and I would have suitable PPE and equipment to do all aspects my job.”

“Health and safety is catered for and we do have a great safety culture, however points raised regarding understaffing, lack of training courses and appliances constantly off the run have a negative impact on morale and FF safety.”

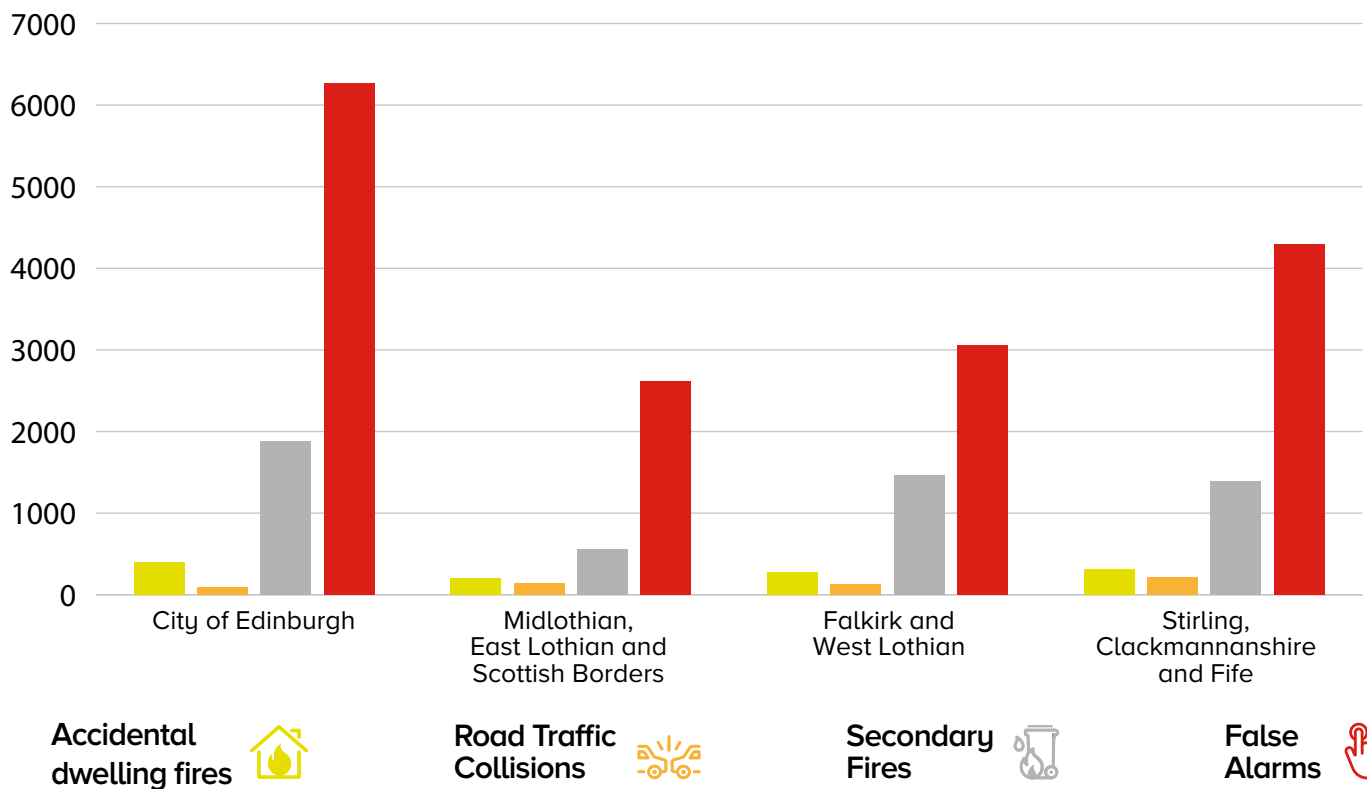
“Yes, there are a range of policies/procedures and guidance along with support available from Health and Wellbeing, POD and support services (FF Charity etc.) to ensure my H&S and wellbeing.”

# Appendix B: LSO Area Performance

The following tables are intended to provide an overview of what was found in each LSO area. Due to our sampling methodology these summaries cannot represent every aspect of performance in an area and are based on our own direct observations or what we were told.

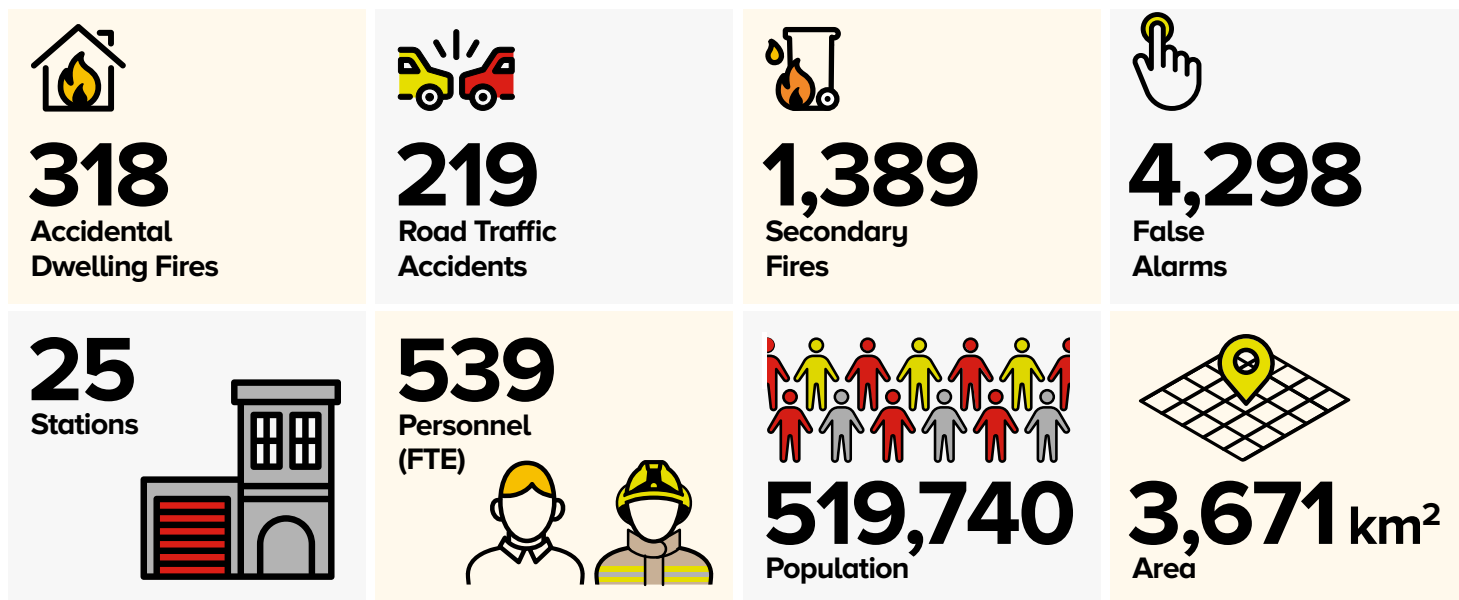
## LSO Area Performance Overview

**East LSO Areas – Incident Activity 2021/22**




# LSO Area Focus– Appendix B continued



## Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Fife (SCF) LSO Area Focus




### SCF LSO Debrief

Theme	Highs	Lows
<p><b>Prevention and Protection</b></p> 	<p>Prevention staff feel supported and empowered to develop solutions and work with partners to improve community outcomes.</p> <p>Engagement has been carried out with partners to help drive up referrals post the reduction experienced during the pandemic. There is evidence of post-domestic incident engagement.</p> <p>Digital working introduced during COVID has continued to deliver benefits in managing engagement activity.</p>	<p>Issues with procuring a structure to use as a base for the youth work at Alloa Fire Station has been a frustration. It was felt that the eventual solution didn't offer value for money. There were similar problems at Methil Fire Station.</p> <p>Community engagement packages are said to not be readily available, such as for water safety. There was a feeling of frustration over not being able to find resources.</p> <p>Issues around access to ICT for new Community Action Team members, e.g. it was said to have taken six months to get a mobile phone for one team member.</p>




**SCF LSO Debrief**

Theme	Highs	Lows
	<p>Access to data regarding incidents helps to target activity and evidence successful initiatives.</p> <hr/> <p>There is a positive view of the Service and partnership working by partners, and about youth engagement, particularly in helping to promote future employability.</p> <hr/> <p>Youth engagement work was said to have resulted in fewer incidents of fire related anti-social behaviour.</p> <hr/> <p>The Protection team consider the audit targets as mostly achievable, if prioritised appropriately, despite the team being under-resourced.</p> <hr/> <p>Enforcement staff reported good Continued Professional Development events provided both locally and by the Directorate.</p>	<p>Community Safety Engagement Tool (CSET) risk scoring is not seen by some to accurately reflect a person’s actual risk, leading to deserving cases not receiving interlinked alarms.</p> <hr/> <p>The timing within the community safety Thematic Action Plan for school based activity was said to limit access to schools, as it doesn’t align with school’s priorities and timings.</p> <hr/> <p>Continuing problems with Prevention and Protection Enforcement Database (PPED), means that personnel are maintaining their own records to cover perceived system inadequacies. It is reported as losing data and doesn’t maintain a full history of the premises. There is a strong feeling among staff that this presents a corporate risk.</p>
<p><b>Response</b></p> 	<p>There is an Operational Intelligence (O.I.) group which meets once per month, which is cleansing the area’s O.I. data. Managers get a thorough report following the meeting.</p> <hr/> <p>There is good support to On-Call staff from On-Call Support Watch Commanders. There were said to be a lot of positives coming from the role, it is well received by On-Call staff.</p>	<p>The main challenge described by Wholetime personnel was said to be a lack of crewing, which was particularly challenging for water rescue stations meeting minimum crewing levels.</p> <hr/> <p>The frequency of stand-by and detached duties has an impact on the training of specialist stations.</p>


**SCF LSO Debrief**

Theme	Highs	Lows
	<p>The LSO management team meeting structure is said to be good, with regular monthly meetings to go through priorities and action logs.</p>	<p>There was a view expressed that Glenrothes is not the best location for a water rescue capability, making it an under-used resource. Also due to the location, finding suitable training venues is a challenge.</p>
	<p>All LSO area stations have station plans and action logs. Managers find them useful. But some said the plans lacked flexibility.</p>	<p>Staff overwhelmingly called for wildfire Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to be issued.</p>
	<p>The Operational Assurance system is said to be good, with staff getting feedback through Frontline Updates.</p>	<p>There is a lack of faith in the Getac tablet capabilities resulting in its infrequent use. Some syncing issues were also reported.</p>
	<p>Teams are said to be empowered.</p>	<p>Breathing Apparatus (BA) sets were said to be too complex and heavy but the majority of the time they work ok.</p>
	<p>The LSO area is said to be well resourced.</p>	<p>Some stations had inadequate BA servicing facilities, with poor access to spare cylinders. There is a shortage across the area.</p>
	<p>Some station buildings have had improvements and some have been surveyed for contamination requirements, where this has taken place crews have been consulted in the design.</p>	<p>There were continuing comments from crews about the poor quality of fireground radios.</p>
	<p>Operational Assurance has improved the OA6 form, staff felt that completed forms were looked at, and feedback was on occasion returned.</p>	<p>The lack of drivers is a challenge for some stations, where it was also reported as being difficult getting people onto the driver development pathway.</p>
	<p>Equipment and structural fire Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is reported to be generally good. The new boat at Stirling is said to be a good enhancement to capability.</p>	<p>The general condition and layout of some appliances, including spares, is reported to be less than satisfactory. The transverse locker in newer appliances is said to be causing problems with BA set stowage.</p>

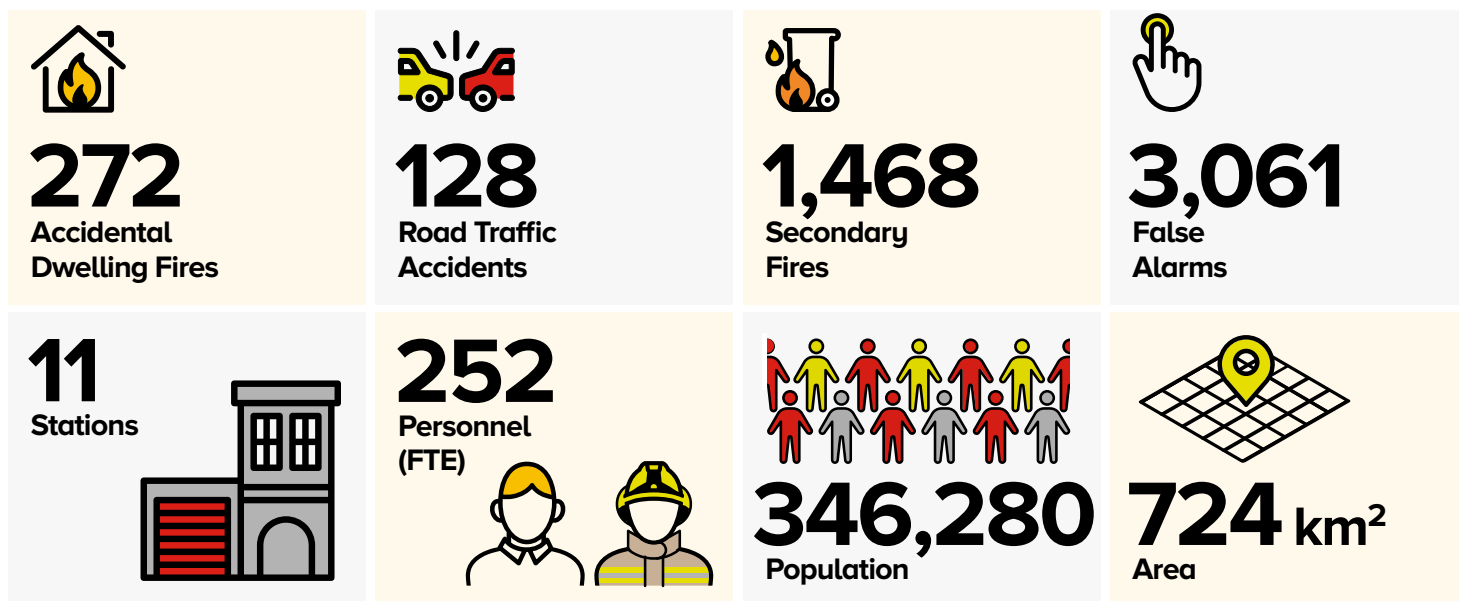
## SCF LSO Debrief

Theme	Highs	Lows
		<p>There is a high degree of frustration around On-Call recruitment with a desire for more local involvement and control. Initial training commitment is said to be an issue for primary employers. Medical and fitness requirements for On-Call are said to be a challenge, when there is an ageing workforce, this will only get worse.</p>
<p><b>Partnership</b></p> 	<p>Partners have a very positive view of the Service, often said to be going 'above and beyond'.</p> <p>The style and content of scrutiny committee performance papers was valued and liked by Elected Members.</p> <p>Partners welcome the involvement of the Service in areas beyond fire, such as poverty, employability and positive action for women and girls.</p> <p>The Community Asset Register (CAR) has been used by officers successfully.</p>	<p>There are limited examples of premises sharing, but partners are keen to explore more opportunities.</p> <p>Turnover in officers, whilst understood, and managed, can lead to a cycle of developing relationships with partners.</p> <p>There is limited formal engagement or training with multi-agency response partners.</p> <p>More could be done to promote the existence of the CAR, some officers had no knowledge of it.</p>
<p><b>People</b></p> 	<p>Personnel generally felt supported by the LSO management team, though there were examples given of when this was felt not to be the case.</p> <p>There has been some limited improvement in the On-Call recruitment process.</p>	<p>It was reported that there was little formal support for recently promoted personnel, whose development was said to be ad hoc and depended on the experience of the immediate line manager.</p> <p>On-call recruitment was described by some as challenging, taking a year to get through the process with people losing interest. Those failing in their application were said not to be getting feedback on their deficiencies.</p>


**SCF LSO Debrief**

Theme	Highs	Lows
	<p>The general view is that the new Training for Operational Competence is better than the previous process, the refresh of the video elements has been an improvement.</p>	<p>Lack of computers and connectivity issues were reported as being a big barrier for training, connectivity is said to be getting worse, particularly in On-Call stations.</p>
	<p>Quarterly Performance meetings are carried out by Group Commanders to keep on top of management issues.</p>	<p>Access to off-station training venues was said to be an issue. The loss of the training centre at Thornton was widely cited as the cause.</p>
		<p>There is a feeling that training at the Newbridge training centre has changed from being a 'learning' experience to an 'assessment'. Training is said to be limited, with a very quick 'workstation-based learning' prior to a BA wear, people are now apprehensive about going.</p>
		<p>We were told that courses are cancelled at Newbridge, more often at short notice.</p>
		<p>We were told that training of recruits differs depending on the training location. This causes problems when the trainee then arrive on station.</p>
		<p>Some stations have a number of trainees, which is said to be difficult to dedicate enough time to individual development.</p>
		<p>There was said to be a lack of scrap cars for training which was felt to disproportionately affect trainees.</p>

Falkirk and West Lothian (FWL) LSO Area Focus



FWL LSO Debrief


Theme	Highs	Lows
<b>Prevention and Protection</b> 	<p>The Prevention staff structure was thought to be flexible as they are able to work across both local authority areas effectively.</p> <hr/> <p>There were good examples of contributing to wider community issues such as fuel poverty and food banks.</p> <hr/> <p>Prevention staff feel empowered to develop solutions and work with partners to improve community outcomes.</p> <hr/> <p>Good work with the third sector is reported, particularly in the West Lothian area.</p>	<p>There are said to be issues around data sharing, instances of fire related anti-social behaviour are not recorded by Police, which can impact on Community Planning Partnership funding allocation.</p> <hr/> <p>Youth engagement activity in some areas has reduced due to a reduction in partner's focused work.</p> <hr/> <p>Community engagement education packages are not readily available, causing a sense of frustration.</p> <hr/> <p>Staff report that the Community Safety Engagement Tool (CSET) is not recording activity correctly in the ESDA.</p>



**FWL LSO Debrief**

Theme	Highs	Lows
<p data-bbox="86 353 156 443"></p>	<p data-bbox="571 353 1016 524">Prevention staff are working with housing colleagues to link tenancy agreements to improvements in anti-social behaviour.</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="571 685 1016 891">Drill-ground supervision training has been offered to Community Safety Advocates, so that they can fully contribute to youth engagement Fire Skills and other practical courses.</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="571 913 1016 1016">The area Protection team is now recruiting experienced auditing officers to fill vacancies.</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="571 1106 1016 1209">Protection staff are very well supported by CPD events from the Directorate.</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="571 1263 1016 1402">An Unwanted Fire Alarm Signal (UFAS) champion is working with regular UFAS offenders to reduce their impact.</p>	<p data-bbox="1050 353 1495 667">No qualification or career development pathway is available to the Community Safety Advocate role. Access to Continued Professional Development (CPD) is predominantly offered by external partners, with very little offered by the Directorate.</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="1050 685 1495 855">Prevention staff reported poor uniform quality and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provision, with no inclement weather clothing available.</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="1050 913 1495 1084">Recruitment and retention of staff into Protection is said to be an ongoing challenge, with few incentives to move from an operational role.</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="1050 1106 1495 1245">The programme of fire safety audits was said to struggle to go beyond identified Framework premises.</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="1050 1263 1495 1500">There are continuing problems with the Prevention and Protection Enforcement Database (PPED), consequently personnel are maintaining their own records to cover its inadequacies.</p>
<p data-bbox="86 1534 220 1565"><b>Response</b></p> <p data-bbox="86 1576 236 1653"></p>	<p data-bbox="571 1534 1016 1740">Some Watch Commanders were supportive of the idea of tablet technology and would like to see its capabilities increased to incorporate the use of more systems.</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="571 1762 1016 2000">There is good work being carried out to ensure that Operational Intelligence (OI) data is current. A common error list has been developed, to help simplify completion of data input.</p>	<p data-bbox="1050 1534 1495 1673">In general there was a lack of faith in the demountable Getac tablet device capabilities, resulting in its infrequent use.</p> <hr/> <p data-bbox="1050 1762 1495 2000">Lack of crewing, is said to be very challenging, particularly for water rescue meeting minimum crewing levels. Livingston second pump was reported to be off the run approximately 40% of the time.</p>

**FWL LSO Debrief**

Theme	Highs	Lows
	<p>Equipment and structural fire PPE is reported to be generally good, with new torches singled out for praise.</p>	<p>We were advised that the water bowser at Larbert is constantly off the run with mechanical issues, due to its age. Staff felt it should be considered for early replacement.</p>
	<p>There is potential to roll out the bank hours system, which is a pilot in another LSO area. It was felt it would further enhance On-Call appliance availability.</p>	<p>Staff overwhelmingly called for wildfire PPE to be issued.</p>
	<p>There are some examples of adjusting Pre-Determined Attendance (PDA) to respond to changes in risk.</p>	<p>Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) panel roofing issues are present at Livingston fire station. This will require significant capital expenditure.</p>
	<p>There are some good examples of standard tests being recorded electronically on Excel Spreadsheets, this is seen as a positive enhancement.</p>	<p>Flexi Duty Officer radios are said to be not accurately plotting their location. Fireground radios are reported to be very poor.</p>
	<p>There is good support to On-Call staff from Support Watch Commanders (WCs), which will be enhanced by their forthcoming attendance on Instructor courses.</p>	<p>Detached duties are impacting on training in general but particularly with specialist assets.</p>
	<p>Support WCs have flexibility of workplace to increase On-Call availability.</p>	<p>The lack of drivers continues to be a challenge at some stations.</p>
	<p>Crews expressed a desire to show innovation utilising better alternative equipment for effecting entry, which would give better options rather than destroying doors using existing tools.</p>	<p>The Rapid Response Unit appliance was reported as not being utilised fully. There are issues around Operations Control not recognising its availability. Training in the Ultra High Pressure lance is said to be restricted, with a lack of access to materials.</p>
	<p>Protection staff are operationally ready and can substitute for response commanders if the need arises.</p>	<p>Future challenges are expected with High Volume Pump availability, due to limited access to training courses for its operation. The equipment itself is said to be ageing.</p>

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**FWL LSO Debrief**


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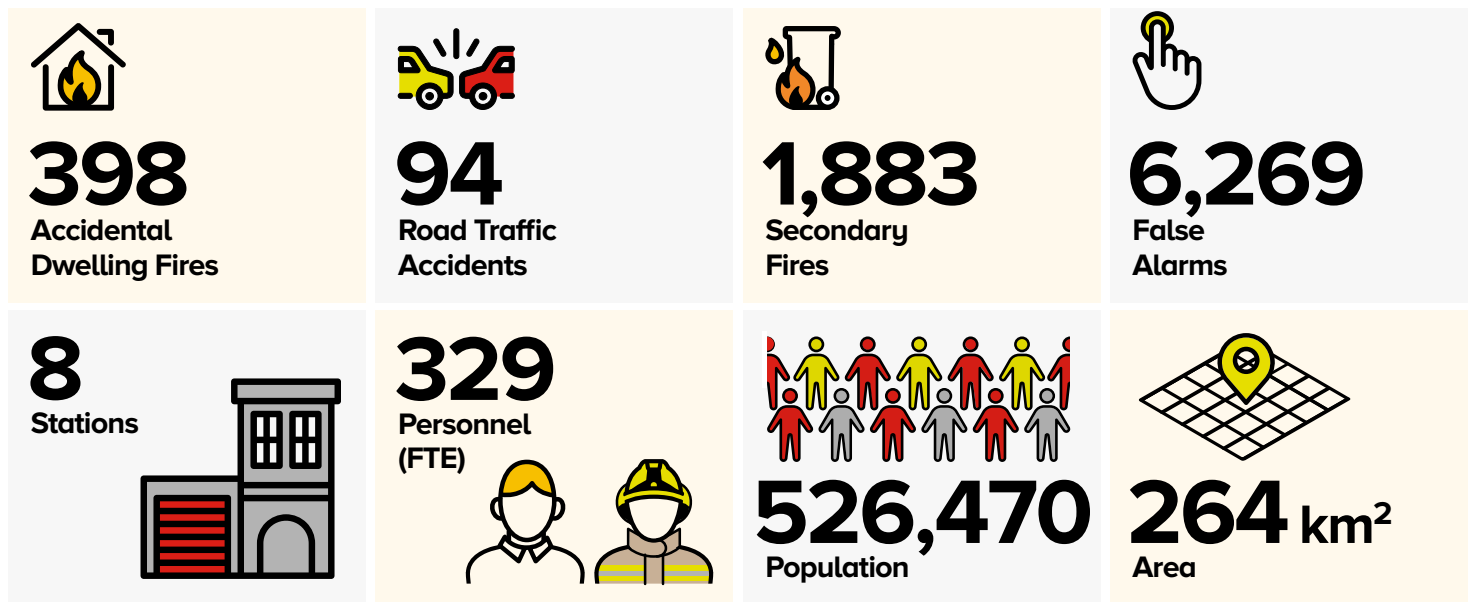
Theme	Highs	Lows
	<p>On-Call seminars are in the early stages of planning and when introduced will support On-Call managers.</p>	<p>There was said to be a lack of access to equipment, that some appliances had previously carried and found useful, e.g. Tirfor winch, air bags and thermal imaging camera.</p>
<p><b>Partnership</b></p> 	<p>Partners in the area have a very positive view of the Service.</p> <hr/> <p>There are community hubs where shared partnership working is centred in both the Falkirk and West Lothian areas.</p> <hr/> <p>There are some examples of premises sharing.</p> <hr/> <p>The Local Area Liaison Officer position was said to be valued by partners.</p> <hr/> <p>There was said to be good relations with partners in the Grangemouth Petrochemical Complex.</p> <hr/> <p>The style and content of scrutiny committee performance papers was valued and liked by Elected Members.</p>	<p>The loss of regular tactical meetings, due to the pandemic, to discuss changes in risk was said to be hampering dynamic use of resources.</p> <hr/> <p>The Community Asset Register continues not to be utilised well.</p> <hr/> <p>Partners expressed a desire to reinstate the ‘cool down crew’ initiative to work with young people.</p> <hr/> <p>Partners expressed some frustration that the Fire Service has very limited funding to support local initiatives.</p> <hr/> <p>Senior local authority leaders expressed a desire to reinstate the engagement with the Chief Officer and the Chair of the Board, which had previously taken place, to get a more strategic insight into national pressures.</p> <hr/> <p>Some Community Planning Partnership partners felt they had a lack of understanding of what SFRS capabilities were and consequently how they could work collectively to achieve outcomes. Though there were good examples of joint working, it was felt that more needed to be done around improving joint awareness education sessions, to further improve outcomes for all.</p>

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**FWL LSO Debrief**

Theme	Highs	Lows
<p><b>People</b></p> 	<p>There has been some improvement in the On-Call recruitment process, taking less time to employ new staff.</p> <hr/> <p>Personnel generally felt supported by the LSO management team, though there were also isolated feelings of a ‘them and us’ atmosphere.</p> <hr/> <p>The updated Training for Operational Competence (TfOC) system was thought to be better for the balanced training of Firefighters.</p> <hr/> <p>Staff reported that they valued operational update case studies e.g. Glasgow School of Art and Albert Drive.</p>	<p>Access to some courses is reported to be an issue, e.g. Breathing Apparatus, High Volume Pump and Abrasive Wheel.</p> <hr/> <p>Instructor shortages at Newbridge are said to be having an impact on course attendance, with evidence of Compartment Fire Behaviour Training courses being cancelled.</p> <hr/> <p>There was reported to be a shortage of assessors and verifiers affecting trainee development portfolio sign off, with a mix of systems in use to record trainee development. Managers reported a of lack of clarity.</p> <hr/> <p>Talent identification, development and the promotion process were reported to be poor by most staff. This is having an effect on officer turnover and a negative impact on those being managed.</p>

City of Edinburgh (COE) LSO Area Focus




CoE LSO Debrief

Theme	Highs	Lows
<b>Prevention and Protection</b> 	<p>There are some examples of the Prevention team contributing to addressing wider community issues such as fuel poverty and corporate parenting, which has a high focus.</p> <p>There was said to have been a reduction in youth related fires by 60%, showing the benefit of youth work. Intervention activity has also taken place with young offenders.</p> <p>Staff feel moderately empowered to work with partners to improve community outcomes and don't feel micromanaged, but morale was said to be low due to constant management changes.</p>	<p>Prevention and Protection (P&amp;P) teams are both understaffed. It is challenging to get people into P&amp;P, as P&amp;P experience is not a requirement for promotion and there are no financial incentives to work there.</p> <p>Youth initiatives are reported to be in decline due to a lack of staff within the Prevention team.</p> <p>Community engagement education packages are said to be not readily available, causing a sense of real frustration.</p>



**CoE LSO Debrief**

Theme	Highs	Lows
	<p>Vulnerable people referrals are taking place but re-engagement work has been undertaken with partners to further revitalise partnership working post pandemic, when joint working had been reduced.</p>	<p>Staff report that the Community Safety Engagement Tool (CSET) is not recording activity correctly, it is not intuitive to use and felt it should be adapted to run on a portable tablet device. Post Domestic Incident Responses (PDIRs) should be carried out dynamically and so would also benefit from a tablet-based resource.</p>
	<p>Evaluation of initiatives and engagement is undertaken.</p>	<p>There is no career development pathway or qualifications offered to Community Safety Engagement staff. There is no formal induction process for new staff. Access to Continued Professional Development (CPD) is predominantly offered by external partners, with very little offered by the P&amp;P Directorate.</p>
		<p>There is poor Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and no inclement weather clothing for the Community Action Team.</p>
	<p>The area is now recruiting auditing and enforcement officers, to fill vacancies in the Protection team.</p>	<p>Recruitment and retention of staff into Protection is an ongoing challenge.</p>
	<p>Enforcement staff are very well supported by CPD events.</p>	<p>Fire safety audits undertaken struggle to go beyond defined Framework premises. The area is really busy with post fire audits. Fire safety audits as a result of Edinburgh festival event venues takes up a lot of officers' time.</p>
	<p>One officer is working with frequent Unwanted Fire Alarm Signal (UFAS) offenders to try to reduce the instances of these.</p>	<p>There are reported continuing problems with the Prevention and Protection Enforcement Database (PPED) system, this leads to personnel maintaining their own records to cover its inadequacies. Staff feel that audits should be recorded as they are being undertaken using a tablet device to improve efficiency.</p>

**CoE LSO Debrief**


Theme	Highs	Lows
	<p>Enforcement officers generate the letters to landlords or managing agents for high rise flats visits undertaken by operational crews, which the crews find helpful; however, this was said to be a burden for protection staff due to the high number of premises in the area. A risk-based approach for these visits has been developed, but as yet has not been implemented.</p>	<p>The area has Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) that are said to be difficult to audit, due to a perceived lack of will to take landlords to task.</p>
<p><b>Response</b></p> 	<p>Work is being carried out to ensure that Operational Intelligence (OI) data is current.</p> <hr/> <p>With the new national UFAS policy rollout there will be a reduction in turnouts which will make an impact in the area, allowing more time to train. However, given the high number of sleeping risk premises in the area there was an opinion expressed locally that the benefits might not be as great as initially envisaged.</p> <hr/> <p>Equipment and structural fire PPE is reported to be generally good, with new torches singled out for praise.</p> <hr/> <p>Some examples of adjusting Pre-Determined Attendances to respond to changes in risk were described.</p> <hr/> <p>A good example of standard tests being recorded electronically on Excel, this is seen as a positive enhancement.</p>	<p>There is a lack of faith in the Getac tablet capabilities resulting in its infrequent use. There are reported instances of tablet syncing issues, meaning that the information might not be up to date.</p> <hr/> <p>The main challenge described by Wholetime personnel is a lack of crewing, leading to frequent pump withdrawal and a lot of detached duties for crews. There is a feeling that the pump withdrawal strategy is not working well for the area.</p> <hr/> <p>Detached duties are said to be impacting on training in general but particularly for specialist assets.</p> <hr/> <p>Staff overwhelmingly called for wildfire PPE to be issued.</p> <hr/> <p>Station-wear uniform was said by some to be terrible and of a very poor quality, leading to more regular replacement.</p>

**CoE LSO Debrief**

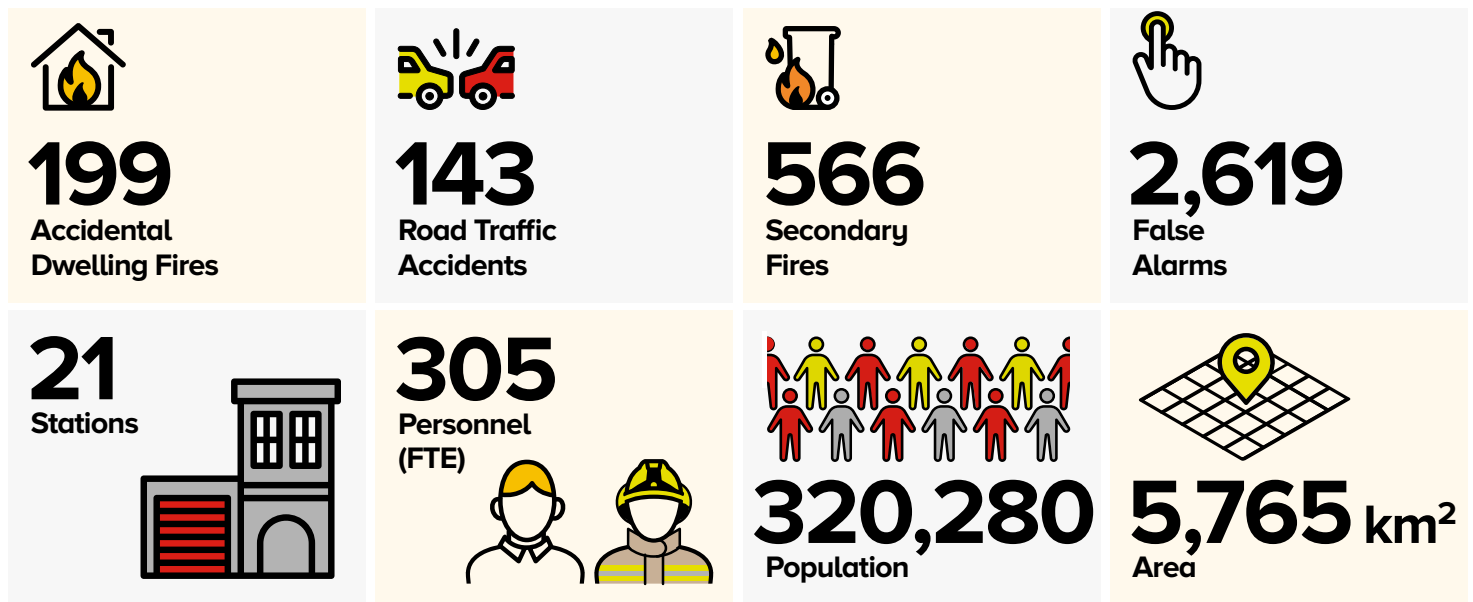
Theme	Highs	Lows
		<p>Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) panel roofing issues are present at several stations, leading to very poor working conditions for some staff. Resolving the roofing problem will require significant capital expenditure.</p> <p>Fireground radios were reported to be very poor.</p> <p>The quality of spare appliances was reported as poor. Some defect turnaround times were also elongated, with 18 months quoted for an Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) hose.</p>
<p><b>Partnership</b></p> 	<p>Partners in the area have a very positive view of the Service.</p> <p>The Local Area Liaison Officer (LALO) position was said to be valued by partners.</p> <p>There are some limited examples of premises sharing with partners.</p> <p>The style and content of scrutiny committee performance papers was valued and liked by Elected Members.</p>	<p>Some partners noted that the constant turnover of SFRS Flexi Duty Officers is not helpful, having to start over ‘teaching’ the new postholder.</p> <p>The Community Asset Register continues to not be well utilised, some officers had no experience or knowledge of it.</p>




**CoE LSO Debrief**

Theme	Highs	Lows
<p><b>People</b></p> 	<p>It was reported that there has been some improvement in the On-Call recruitment process, taking less time.</p>	<p>There was said to be a feeling of low morale, linked to staffing levels and the impact of detached duties, as well as the turnover in supervisory staff.</p>
	<p>Personnel generally felt supported by the LSO management team.</p>	<p>Instructor shortages at Newbridge are said to be having an impact on course attendance, with evidence of Compartment Fire Behaviour Training being cancelled.</p>
	<p>The updated Training for Operational Competence (TfOC) system was thought to be better for the balanced training of firefighters.</p>	<p>There were reports of a lack of training in some equipment, e.g. on heavy rescue appliance. Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) training was said to be consistently poor. There are said to be no venues for trench collapse training.</p>
	<p>Staff reported that they valued operational update case studies (e.g. Glasgow School of Art fire, and the Albert Drive fire), but don't feel it is worth feeding into the Operational Assurance process as they don't get feedback on their contribution.</p>	<p>There is a reported shortage of assessors and verifiers affecting trainee sign off, with a mix of systems in use to record trainee development. Managers reported a of lack of clarity on the process.</p>
		<p>Talent identification, development and the promotion process were reported as being poor by staff.</p>
		<p>On-Call staff feel the need for more contract flexibility in the hours offered to attract a wider range of people.</p>



Midlothian, East Lothian and Scottish Borders (MELSB) LSO Area Focus



MELSB LSO Debrief

Theme	Highs	Lows
<b>Prevention and Protection</b> 	<p>Prevention staff feel empowered to develop solutions and work with partners to improve community outcomes.</p> <p>Community engagement is occurring beyond fire safety into other wider areas of community protection, such as hoarding and domestic abuse.</p> <p>A Community Safety plan for 2023-24 focusing on five themes is currently being developed.</p> <p>There was evidence of engaging with partners and exchange of referrals regarding those members of the community considered vulnerable.</p> <p>There is evidence of post domestic incident engagement being carried out, although the numbers have reduced over the past three years.</p>	<p>Getting access to schools is said to be a big problem, because school curriculum core priorities do not always align to the SFRS's or its timings.</p> <p>Community engagement packages are reported to be not readily available. There is real frustration over not being able to find resources.</p> <p>There was felt to be poor Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and no inclement weather clothing for the Community Action Team.</p> <p>There is no centrally provided induction material for new staff, with a feeling of detachment from the Directorate.</p> <p>There was reported to be a lack of availability of drill-ground supervision courses to allow prevention staff to fully contribute to the provision of the Fire Skills youth engagement courses.</p>



**MELSB LSO Debrief**

Theme	Highs	Lows
	<p>Currently recruiting additional staff to the Protection team.</p> <p>Protection staff feel very well supported by CPD events.</p> <p>At a personal level there is said to be a good relationship between the fire investigation team and Protection personnel to exchange information.</p> <p>The Protection team feel well supported by management.</p>	<p>No career development pathway or qualifications offered to Community Safety Engagement staff. Access to Continued Professional Development (CPD) is predominantly offered by external partners, with very little offered by the Directorate.</p> <p>Recruitment and retention of Protection staff is an ongoing challenge. The progression pathway is not clear at this time. There is a lack of experience of enforcement within some of the current management structure.</p> <p>Staff felt that fire safety audit targets need to be reduced, staff struggle to get beyond Framework designated premises. There is also seldom time to engage and educate dutyholders. There is said to be a general lack of awareness of their responsibilities by dutyholders.</p> <p>Continuing problems with the enforcement system Prevention and Protection Enforcement Database (PPED), means that personnel are maintaining their own records to cover system inadequacies.</p> <p>There is now an expectation for Protection staff to remain competent operationally, however, staff report that audit targets have not been reviewed to accommodate this extra workload.</p>
<p><b>Response</b></p> 	<p>On-Call stations generally have the usual issues around daytime availability although there are some limited examples of very good availability for which the crews are to be commended.</p>	<p>Lack of crewing was said to be very challenging, particularly for water rescue stations meeting minimum crewing levels. There is also an impact on training of specialist stations when crew are detached or the pump is sent on stand-by to make up for numbers elsewhere.</p>


**MELSB LSO Debrief**

Theme	Highs	Lows
	<p>The online briefing session for Wholetime personnel returning from annual leave was described as being valuable.</p>	<p>The lack of drivers is generally said to be challenging, resulting in examples of crew members continually having to drive appliances, in some cases for years.</p>
	<p>The Bank Hours pilot scheme to fill On-Call staffing deficiencies by circulating available staff to work in other areas to keep pumps on the run, was hailed as being a great success.</p>	<p>There is a high degree of frustration around On-Call recruitment with a desire for more local involvement and control. The process was said to be too slow in getting people through the system.</p>
	<p>Good support to On-Call staff from On-Call Support Watch Commanders was reported. The role was seen as a positive development for On-Call.</p>	<p>Initial training commitment is an issue for On-Call staff getting leave from primary employers. Medical and fitness requirements for On-Call are said to be a challenge.</p>
	<p>Operational Intelligence information held was being checked to ensure its accuracy. There was some limited evidence of crews visiting risk sites.</p>	<p>There is a lack of faith in the Getac operational intelligence tablet capabilities resulting in its infrequent use. Some tablet syncing issues were reported meaning that the information may not be up to date.</p>
	<p>There was some limited evidence of changes to response arrangements, due to short-term increase in risk, however for some other identified long-term risks, there is no local capability.</p>	<p>Staff overwhelmingly identified the need for wildfire Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to be issued.</p>
	<p>The SharePoint system for station management information was thought to be very good.</p>	<p>Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete panel roofing issues are present at several stations in the area, requiring considerable capital spend.</p>
		<p>Some stations had inadequate Breathing Apparatus servicing facilities, with poor access to spare cylinders. There is a shortage across the area which has an impact on training.</p>

**MELSB LSO Debrief**

Theme	Highs	Lows
<p><b>Partnership</b></p> 	<p>Partners have a very positive view of the Service. With relationships with the local authorities described as being strong.</p> <hr/> <p>There were examples of premises sharing, with partners keen to explore more opportunities. Though in some areas location sharing had stopped as a result of the pandemic.</p> <hr/> <p>The style and content of scrutiny committee performance papers was valued and liked.</p>	<p>A lack of access to data was reported as staff are now not located with some partners at tactical meetings, which was a result of working practice changes brought about during the pandemic. These meetings were described as really useful information exchanges. There was felt to be scope for partners to increase referrals for home safety visits.</p> <hr/> <p>Disappointment was expressed by a partner that the shared premises initiative to replace Dalkeith Fire Station seemed to have stalled.</p> <hr/> <p>The Community Asset Register continues to be underused and not well understood.</p>
<p><b>People</b></p> 	<p>Personnel generally felt supported by the LSO management team. But the turnover in managers was also cited as a problem.</p> <hr/> <p>There was an overall positive view of local trainers and training delivery, though there were also limited examples of less satisfaction with the support given.</p> <hr/> <p>Wholetime and On-call stations were aligned for training purposes. But joint training had been interrupted during the pandemic.</p>	<p>Training is particularly under resourced, with a need for more support in the borders area. There was not a positive view of Newbridge training centre provided training, there was said to be a fear of going there. Access to some courses is problematic. There was said to be a lack of feedback on course places allocation information from the Directorate. There was a feeling that there is scope to run more courses locally, realising efficiencies.</p> <hr/> <p>Getting Risk Assessments approved for off-station training sites was reported as problematic, taking up a lot of time. A lack of access to venues to train is also a more general issue.</p> <hr/> <p>The low number of computers and poor connectivity were seen by many as barriers to effective training, particularly for On-Call staff and in the remoter areas.</p>

**MELSB LSO Debrief**

Theme	Highs	Lows
		<p>There was said to be a lack of structure to urban search and rescue (USAR) training. Issues were fed back to the central directorate with no response.</p>
		<p>Support to newly promoted staff, arranging ICT systems permissions was felt could be improved to improve efficiency.</p>

## Appendix C

About His Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland (HMFSI)

HMFSI is a body that operates within, but independently of, the Scottish Government. Inspectors have the scrutiny powers specified in section 43B of the Act. These include inquiring into the state and efficiency of the SFRS, its compliance with Best Value, and the manner in which it is carrying out its functions.

HMFSI Inspectors may, in carrying out inspections, assess whether the SFRS is complying with its duty to secure Best Value and continuous improvement. If necessary, Inspectors can be directed by Scottish Ministers to look into anything relating to the SFRS as they consider appropriate.

We also have an established role in providing professional advice and guidance on the emergency response, legislation and education in relation to the Fire and Rescue Service in Scotland.

Our powers give latitude to investigate areas we consider necessary or expedient for the purposes of, or in connection with, the carrying out of our functions:

- The SFRS must provide us with such assistance and co-operation as we may require to enable us to carry out our functions.
- When we publish a report, the SFRS must also have regard to what we have found and take such measures, if any, as it thinks fit.
- Where our report identifies that the SFRS is not efficient or effective (or Best Value not secured), or will, unless remedial measures are taken, cease to be efficient or effective, Scottish Ministers may direct the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to take such measures as may be required. The SFRS must comply with any direction given.

We work with other inspectorates and agencies across the public sector and co-ordinate our activities to reduce the burden of inspection and avoid unnecessary duplication.

We aim to add value and strengthen public confidence in the SFRS and do this through independent scrutiny and evidence-led reporting about what we find. Where we make recommendations in a report, we will follow them up to assess the level of progress.

We will aim to identify and promote good practice that can be applied across Scotland. Our approach is to support the SFRS to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local and national needs. The terms of reference for inspections are consulted upon and agreed with parties that the Chief Inspector deems relevant.

## Appendix D

How this inspection was carried out.

The purpose of this inspection is to examine the effectiveness of Service Delivery by the SFRS within its East SDA.

An inquiry by the Inspectorate can be self-directed or can be subject to direction by Scottish Ministers. This inquiry into the SFRS is self-directed by the Chief Inspector. The following persons contributed to the Inspection and to the report:

**Robert Scott QFSM**, Chief Inspector

**Brian McKenzie**, Assistant Inspector

**Graeme Fraser**, Assistant Inspector

**John Joyce QFSM**, Assistant Inspector

**Martin Riach**, Inspection Manager

**Iain Cameron**, Station Commander (SFRS Secondee)

Assistant Inspector Rick Taylor, who left the Inspectorate prior to the inspection concluding, was also a participant in the inspection fieldwork.

### Methodology

This inspection has involved a number of different methods of evidence gathering and analysis:

- a desk-top data review of documents and data supplied by the SFRS. We undertook a sense check and assessment of the content of procedural documents.
- a number of face-to-face and virtual interviews with SFRS staff who are responsible for the provision of, management, and training necessary for service delivery.
- a sample examination of SFRS equipment, premises and records held at fire stations.
- in person and virtual meetings with partners of the SFRS.

## Footnotes

1 <https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-area/community-risk-register/>

2 HMFSI: The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Command and Control Mobilising System (CCMS), 2023

3 HMFSI: The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's Management of its Fleet and Equipment Function, 2019

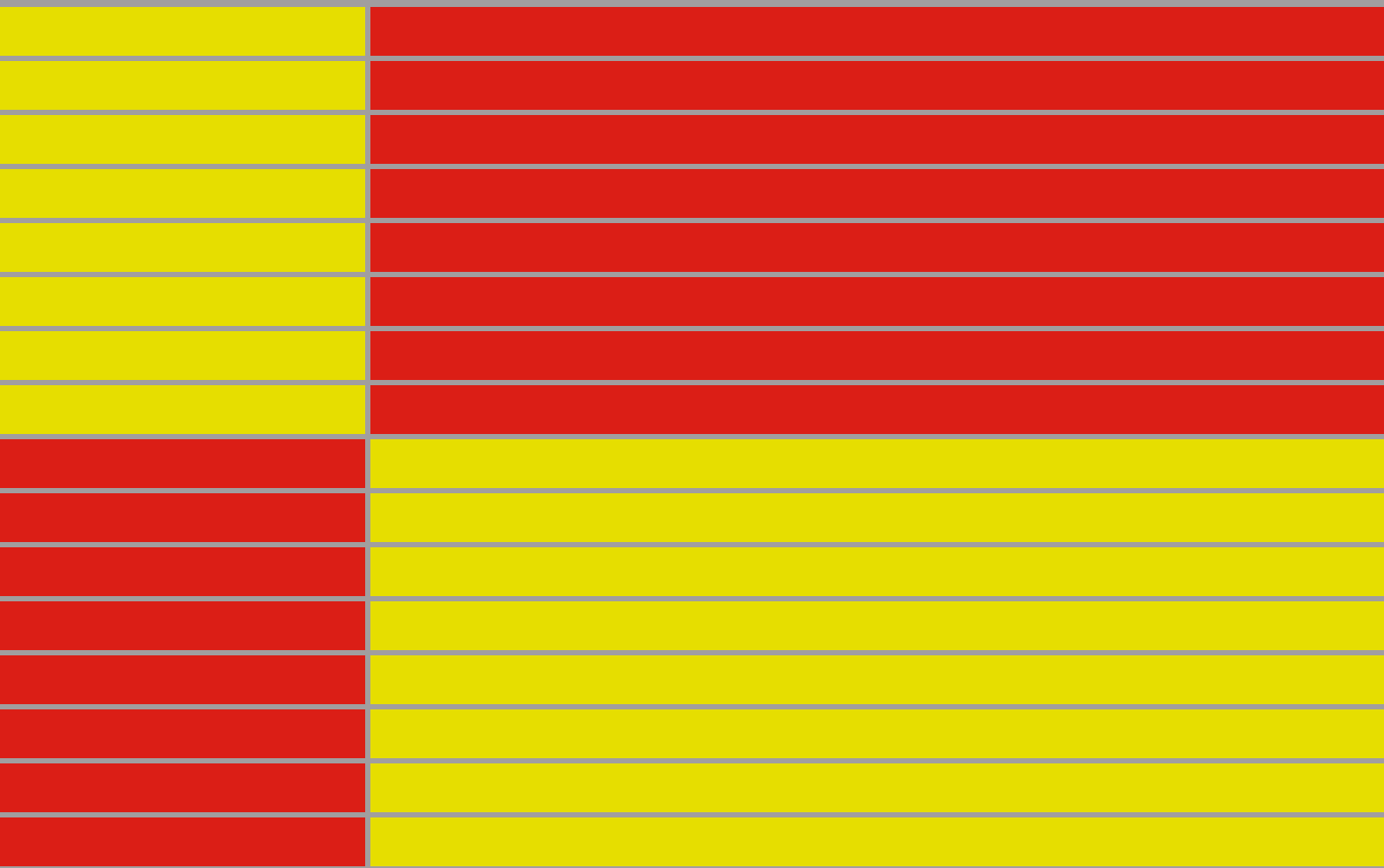
4 HMFSI: The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's arrangements for the provision of Operational Risk Information, 2019

5 HMFSI: Command and Control: aspects of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Incident Command System 2020



# Glossary

<b>CAR</b>	Community Asset Register
<b>COMAH</b>	Control of Major Accident Hazards
<b>DACO</b>	Deputy Assistant Chief Officer
<b>DIM</b>	Detection, Identification and Monitoring
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>LCMS</b>	Learning Content Management System: an online learning resource for firefighters
<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment
<b>PPED</b>	Prevention and Protection Enforcement Database
<b>PREP</b>	Pre-Recruitment Engagement Programme
<b>RAAC</b>	Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete
<b>Relevant premises</b>	Non-domestic premises to which fire safety law applies
<b>RRP</b>	Regional Resilience Partnership
<b>SDA</b>	Service Delivery Area. The SFRS is organised into three SDAs, North, East and West.
<b>SFRS</b>	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedure
<b>TOM</b>	Target Operation Model
<b>UFAS</b>	A false alarm incident in non-domestic premises where the SFRS is called out as a consequence of a fire alarm operating
<b>USAR</b>	Urban Search and Rescue
<b>2005 Act</b>	Fire (Scotland) Act 2005



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