Inspection of the
Scottish Fire
and Rescue Service

# West

**West**
**Service Delivery Area**

# Contents

# About this inspection

1. This is the second report of a cycle of Service Delivery Area (SDA) Inspections of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS).

2. Since the SFRS was established in 2013 until the introduction of this SDA approach, His Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI) had undertaken inspection of service delivery at a Local Authority (LA) level. From 2023, inspection of local service delivery has been at a combined regional level of the SFRS's 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. Several of the LA areas making up the West Service Delivery Area (WSDA) have previously been the subject of a local area inspection by HMFSI, namely, City of Glasgow, East Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Dumfries and Galloway and Argyll and Bute. In this SDA inspection, we have revisited these areas along with those local authority areas not previously visited; Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire.



Inspection Themes

**Prevention & Protection** Protecting communities from fire and other emergencies

**Response** Responding to incidents when they do occur

**Partnership** Working in partnership with others to improve community safety outcomes

**People** Managing and supporting the workforce

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 an LSO level and are aggregated at an 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 WSDA.

5. Building on the process for the East SDA (ESDA), we undertook a short anonymous survey of all SFRS staff based within the WSDA. We are grateful to all those who took time to complete our questionnaire as it has helped to inform and reinforce our findings. There was a total of 590 responses, which equated to 24% of WSDA establishment compared to a 23% return for the ESDA. The breakdown of returns was 53% Wholetime staff, 16% Support Staff, 14% On-Call Staff, 12% Flexi Duty officer and 5% Directorate staff.

6. This report focuses on four key themes: Prevention and Protection; Response; Partnership; and People. In exploring these themes, we interviewed SFRS operational staff, management teams, functional staff and support staff as well as partners from local authorities, police and the third sector.

7. Our fieldwork took place between May 2023 and March 2024. During that period there were several significant events or issues that we accept may have impacted our analysis and fieldwork. In particular we noted;

   • the SFRS introduced a revised Unwanted Fire Alarm Signal (UFAS) policy in July 2023, which altered call handling and mobilisation processes;

   • the SFRS instigated a temporary Appliance Withdrawal Strategy in September 2023, which removed five pumping appliances (three from City of Glasgow, one from South Lanarkshire and one from Inverclyde) from the WSDA as part of a Strategic Service Review Programme (SSRP);

   • the SFRS implemented a High Reach Appliance (HRA) Strategy in September 2023 which removed seven height appliances from the WSDA with a net reduction of fifteen down to eight;

   • the SFRS changed the water rescue provision on the River Clyde in September 2023, which altered crewing for water rescue at Polmadie Fire Station from a dedicated to a dual-staffing model;

   • HMFSI published a thematic report 'Climate Change: managing the operational impact on fires and other weather-related emergencies' in September 2023, which had a series of recommendations for the SFRS;

   • following a consultation process, the SFRS Board approved the closure of Leadhills fire station in November 2023, and

   • HMFSI published a thematic report 'Mental Health and Wellbeing Support in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service' in December 2023, which had a series of recommendations for the SFRS.

**What inspection judgments mean:**

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

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

9. The awarding of the Gradings is subjectively derived using the Inspectors' professional judgement, skills and knowledge, and based on analysis, evidence, survey and observation.

10. Appendix A gives a synopsis of LSO area performance data, Appendix B contains information about HMFSI and Appendix C provides detail of how this inspection was carried out.
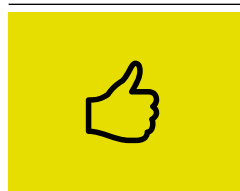
# HMFSI WSDA Ratings Matrix

| | Prevention and Protection | How effective is the Service in the WSDA at keeping people safe? We consider this to be **satisfactory**. |
|---|---|---|

| | Understanding fire and other risks | There is a good understanding of risk and the area has strong examples of Local Fire and Rescue Plans (LFRP) as well as supporting documents, working with partners to achieve this. Staff are generally able to articulate the risks most relevant to them and how it linked to their role. There is also some evidence of managing Operational Intelligence (OI) and Business Continuity (BC). Although not exhaustive, issues with governance, planning, the demountable tablet use, specific hazard operating procedures and operational exercising are areas of improvement identified and contributed to the overall grading. |
|---|---|---|
| | **Preventing fire and other risks** | There is a good understanding of prevention and the area has strong examples of Local Prevention Delivery Plans (LPDP) as well as supporting documents, working with partners to achieve this. There is also many positive examples and success stories of delivering innovative initiatives within the community. Although not exhaustive, issues with local station involvement, funding for intervention, fire investigation involvement and home fire safety targets are areas identified for improvement and contributed to the overall grading. |
| | **Protecting the public through fire regulation** | There is a good understanding of protection and the area has strong examples of Local Enforcement Delivery Plans (LEDP) as well as supporting documents, working with partners to achieve this. Although not exhaustive, issues with staff turnover and subsequent development, support from the national function, target setting, high rise flat workload and the continued issues with Prevention and Protection Enforcement Database (PPED) are areas for improvement and contributed to the overall grading. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Opportunity for improvement** | **Satisfactory** | **Good** | **Outstanding** |

# HMFSI WSDA Ratings Matrix

### Response

How effective is the Service in the WSDA 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

There is strong evidence to demonstrate the Service has historically assessed the local risk and has developed response plans accordingly. In general, the Service has the resources in locations within the WSDA commensurate with these historic plans and that training and exercising are all being delivered to a greater or lesser degree. There is evidence of proactive management of operational guidance and procedures, the Target Operating Model (TOM) and management of staffing levels, personnel skills and appliance availability. Although not exhaustive, issues with detached duties, skills availability, On-Call staffing levels, On-Call appliance availability, Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) panelling, Safe Working at Height (SWaH) provision, structured debriefing as well as modernisation processes were all areas identified for improvement and contributed to the overall grading.

### Responding to fire and other emergencies

There is strong evidence to demonstrate the Service can respond effectively to fires and other emergencies. In general, the Service has effective call handling and response performance. Operational staff are also supplied with the maintained assets of equipment, fleet, property, personal protective equipment and uniform to be able to do their job effectively. Although not exhaustive, issues with provision and maintenance of these assets, station condition and suitability, operational exercising as well as modernisation processes are all areas identified for improvement and contributed to the overall grading.

**Opportunity for improvement**     **Satisfactory**     **Good**     **Outstanding**

# HMFSI WSDA Ratings Matrix

## Partnership

How effective is the Service in the WSDA 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 excellent partnership working across the area, both at formal and informal levels. The statutory community planning partnership structures are supported extremely well by management teams within the WSDA. 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 is valued by local authority partners. There is also good evidence of proactive involvement in assessing community risk, managing resilience, as well as seeking collaboration opportunities. Although not exhaustive, issues of capacity invested in partnerships balanced against that invested in operational preparedness, as well as the continued underuse of the Community Asset Register (CAR) are areas identified for improvement and contributed to the overall grading.

**Opportunity for improvement**      **Satisfactory**      **Good**      **Outstanding**
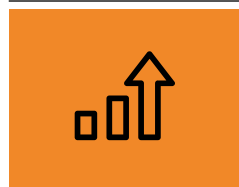
# HMFSI WSDA Ratings Matrix

## People

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

### Managing performance and developing leaders

We found that the Service had taken proactive measures to modernise and address staffing issues. This resulted in the observation that the TOM for Wholetime is relatively healthy and that teams generally had the correct complement. We found good examples of local management developing supervisory and middle managers in an attempt to address identified leadership issues. We also found that recruitment of On-Call staff had been assisted with changes to the recruitment process by providing more information and support as well as delivering some elements of training in a modular format. Although not exhaustive, issues surrounding On-Call availability, On-Call staffing levels, leadership and manager development, staff appraisal, engagement, autonomy, centralisation and recruitment and retention are all areas identified for improvement and contributed to the overall grading.

### Ensuring people have the rights skills and training

We found that the Service had taken proactive measures to modernise and address training and development issues with the introduction of an innovative vision and strategy. Some aspects of core skills training and refresher training are positive with the Service closely meeting the attainment standard in some areas. There is also very positive feedback regarding local training teams with operational personnel generally very engaged with them. There was also good evidence of the training function reviewing feedback and adapting, with the modular task and task management course being a good example. Although not exhaustive, issues surrounding the use of training officers for non-training logistics, well documented Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) issues, low levels of core and refresher skill attainment in some areas, problematic driver training, tactical ship firefighting and other specialist skill acquisition as well as some negative feedback in relation to the national training centre are all areas identified for improvement and contributed to the overall grading.

| Opportunity for improvement | Satisfactory | Good | Outstanding |

# HMFSI WSDA Ratings Matrix

## People

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

### Supporting mental health and wellbeing

We found that the Service had taken proactive measures to modernise mental health and wellbeing issues with the publication of its strategy and related processes. We found positive examples of the use of the post incident support process, marketing posters, improving culture at hot debriefs, the use of health and safety workplace audits and positive comparable absence rates with other areas in the Service. Although not exhaustive, issues surrounding the recent recommendations made in our mental health and wellbeing thematic audit, acts of violence and the return-to-work management system are areas identified for improvement and contributed to the overall grading.
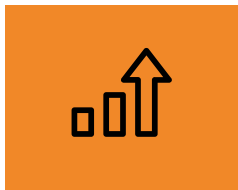
### Promoting equality and diversity

We found that the Service had taken proactive measures to make the workforce more representative of the community it serves. The Service has a positive action strategy that assists with the recruitment of under-represented groups. There is also mandatory professional behaviours and equality training for all staff, which supports this issue. Long-standing issues surrounding the disproportionate gender and ethnic minority workforce balance continue and are issues identified for improvement and contributed to the overall grading.

Opportunity for improvement    Satisfactory    Good    Outstanding

# Conclusion

11. It was satisfying to inspect the WSDA. We found, in general, that the area is well managed and that there is a high level of engagement and motivation among staff to provide the best service for the communities they serve, in a safe, efficient and effective manner. Inevitably we found dissatisfaction and discord, but we judge that this was in part due to frustration caused by a reduction in resources and continuing financial challenges. It is commendable that we found a high level of motivation in the WSDA despite the challenges to the Service and that high performance is an aspiration at all levels.

12. We are satisfied with many aspects of the performance of the SFRS within the WSDA. In particular, we found a Good understanding of the risk within the area and that there is good engagement with partners and community planning. There is good evidence of keeping the public safe and secure through prevention and protection activity as well as planning and responding to incidents. However, there are issues that we believe require improvement and as such we deemed these aspects Satisfactory. We found evidence of some good people management but also many instances of where improvement could be explored or made. Although not exhaustive, we consider that there is Opportunity for Improvement in the areas of training, assurance, development, engagement, communication as well as recruitment and retention.

13. The Inspection team would like to offer our thanks to Stephen Wright, the WSDA DACO, and his staff, who positively engaged and worked with us during this inspection. Likewise, we would also thank all internal and external partners for their contribution and feedback throughout this process.

# WSDA in Numbers

14. The WSDA protects a population of circa 2.5 million and covers an area of 20,050 km². WSDA staff are based predominantly at 127 Fire Stations. During the course of the inspection fieldwork, HMFSI attended 67 (53%) of these Stations and interviewed 69 (50%) separate crews resulting in an approximate sample of 23% of shifts. We also interviewed two Operations Control (OC) shifts representing around 40% of OC shifts as well as proportions of OC management and functional staff.

15. As of 31 March 2023, there were 2,465 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) SFRS service delivery personnel based in the WSDA, of those, 2,408 were uniformed staff. The various operational duty systems include Wholetime, Retained On-Call, Volunteer On-Call, Day Shift Duty Staffing and Flexi Duty. There are also a number of support staff duty systems employed, which vary according to the needs of the Functional role.

## 2.5m
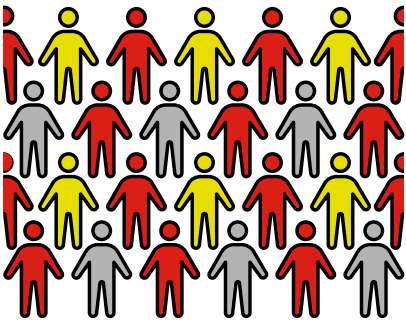
The WSDA serves a population of **2.5 million people**.

## 20,050km²
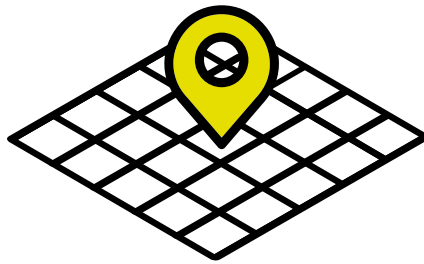
based across a wide ranging geography of some **20,050 square kilometres**.

## 127
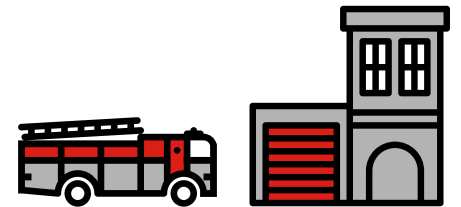
West area crews are based at **127 fire stations**.

As at 31 March 2023 **2,464 SFRS service delivery personnel**\* were based in the West, of those, **2,408 are uniformed staff**.

## 2,408 uniformed staff

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

16. The SDA is made up of thirteen local authority areas; the City of Glasgow, South Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire, Dumfries and Galloway, South Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, East Dunbartonshire, West Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute.

17. There are six Area Commanders who are designated, under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 (FSA), as LSOs (Local Senior Officers). These LSOs lead the management of the SFRS's local activities in the WSDA. They each have responsibility for service delivery in allocated local authority areas. Details of the LSO areas are shown in table 1 below.

| LSO Area | Acronym | Size (km$^2$) | Population (1000's) | Employees (FTE) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| City of Glasgow | CoG | 175 | 635 | 518 |
| East Dunbartonshire, West Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute | EWDAB | 7,243 | 283 | 575 |
| East, North and South Ayrshire | ENSA | 3,369 | 367 | 404 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | D&G | 6,426 | 149 | 249 |
| North and South Lanarkshire | LAN | 2,242 | 664 | 442 |
| East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde | ERRI | 595 | 353 | 276 |

Table 1: Details of LSO areas within the WSDA.

18. The DACO and their support officer accounts for the remainder of staff.
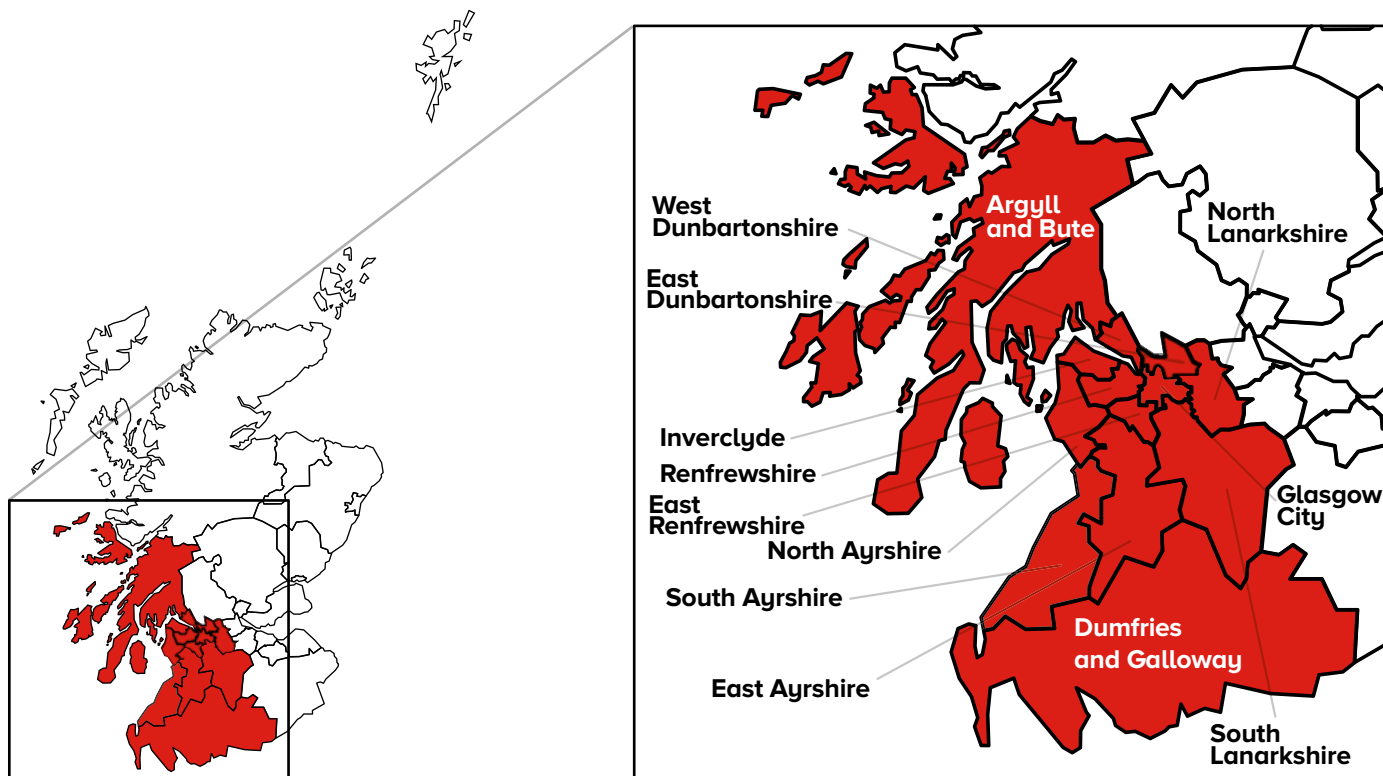
# East Dunbartonshire, West Dunbartonshire, Argyll and Bute (EWDAB) LSO Area

## East Dunbartonshire

19. East Dunbartonshire covers 175 km² and has a population circa 109,000 people. There are approximately 71 FTE employees mostly based at three Fire Stations. All three stations are Wholetime and are located at Bishopbriggs, Kirkintilloch and Milngavie. The area has three pumping appliances and two specialist appliance (Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) vehicle and a Command Support Unit (CSU)). A Special Operations Response Unit (SORU), which was reassigned from City of Glasgow is currently doubling as a CSU, whilst new appliance capital spend is ongoing.

## West Dunbartonshire

20. West Dunbartonshire covers 159 km² and has a population circa 88,000 people. There are approximately 108 FTE employees mostly based within three fire stations. Clydebank is staffed by Wholetime personnel, Dumbarton by a mixture of Wholetime and On-Call Retained personnel and Balloch solely by On-Call Retained staff. Some of the Staff are also based at the Area Headquarters in Clydebank.

The area has five pumping appliances, one of which is a Combined Aerial Rescue Pump (CARP), and an Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)/Heavy Rescue Unit (HRU). Following the implementation of the HRA Strategy in September 2023 the CARP was removed and replaced by a dedicated pumping appliance.

## Argyll and Bute

21. Argyll and Bute covers 6,909 km² and has a population circa 86,000 people. There are approximately 396 FTE employees mostly based within 39 Fire Stations. Helensburgh and Oban are staffed by a mixture of Wholetime and On-Call Retained personnel. Arrochar, Bowmore, Campbeltown, Cove, Dunoon, Garelochhead, Inveraray, Lochgilphead, Rothesay, Tarbert, Tighnabruaich and Tobermory are solely staffed by On-Call Retained staff, whilst Appin, Ardfern, Bridge of Orchy, Bunessan, Carradale, Colintraive, Coll, Craignure, Colonsay, Dalmally, Gigha, Iona, Jura, Kerrera, Kilmelford, Lismore, Lochgoilhead, Luing, Minard, Port Charlotte, Port Ellen, Salen, Seil, Strachur and Tiree are solely staffed by On-Call Volunteers. The area has 42 pumping appliances and three Volunteer Support Units. There is also a dedicated Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) and Swift Water Rescue Team (SRT) Unit based at Oban. Following the implementation of the HRA Strategy in

September 2023 the dedicated ALP was removed from the Area and a Combined Aerial Recue Pump (CARP) replaced it, increasing the number of pumping appliances to 43.

# East, North and South Ayrshire (ENSA) LSO Area

### East Ayrshire

22. East Ayrshire covers 1,262 km² and has a population circa 122,000 people. There are approximately 103 FTE employees mostly based within eight Fire Stations. Kilmarnock is staffed by Wholetime personnel whilst, Cumnock, Dalmellington, Mauchline, Muirkirk, New Cumnock, Newmilns and Stewarton solely by On-Call Retained staff. The area has 10 pumping appliances, one of which is a CARP. It also has a dedicated Major Incident Unit (MIU) for USAR.

### North Ayrshire

23. North Ayrshire covers 885 km² and has a population circa 134,000 people. There are approximately 227 FTE employees mostly based within 14 Fire Stations. Kilwinning is staffed by Wholetime personnel whilst Ardrossan and Dreghorn are staffed by a mixture of Wholetime and On-Call Retained personnel. Beith, Brodick, Dalry, Kilbirnie, Lamlash, Largs, Millport and Skelmorlie are solely staffed by On-Call Retained staff, whilst Blackwaterfoot, Corriecravie and Lochranza are solely staffed by On-Call Volunteers. Some of the Staff are also based at the Area Headquarters in Ardrossan. The area has 17 pumping appliances, two of which are Rapid Response Units (RRU). It also has one Wildfire Unit and a CSU.

### South Ayrshire

24. South Ayrshire covers 1,222 km² and has a population circa 112,000 people. There are approximately 74 FTE employees mostly based within five Fire Stations. Ayr is staffed by a mixture of Wholetime and On-Call Retained personnel and Colmonell, Girvan, Maybole and Troon solely by On-Call Retained staff. The area has 8 pumping appliances, one of which is a CARP and one other which is an RRU. It also has a dedicated specialist appliance for swift water rescue (SRT). Following the implementation of the HRA Strategy in September 2023 the CARP was removed from the Area and a dedicated pumping appliance replaced it.

# Dumfries and Galloway (D&G) LSO Area

### Dumfries and Galloway

25. Dumfries and Galloway covers 6,426 km² and has a population circa 149,000 people. There are approximately 249 FTE employees mostly based within seventeen Fire Stations, ten of which are Flood Response trained. Dumfries is staffed by a mixture of Wholetime and On-Call Retained personnel. Annan, Castle Douglas, Dalbeattie, Gatehouse of Fleet, Gretna, Kirkcudbright, Langholm, Lockerbie, Moffat, New Galloway, Newton Stewart, Sanquhar, Stranraer, Thornhill and Whithorn are solely staffed by On-Call Retained staff, whilst Drummore is solely staffed by On-Call Volunteers. Some of the staff are also based at the Area Headquarters in Dumfries. The area has 22 pumping appliances, one of which is a CARP and two others which are RRUs. It also has dedicated specialist appliances for SRT (2 units), Wildfire (2 units), Welfare and Heavy Rescue.

# North and South Lanarkshire (LAN) LSO Area

### North Lanarkshire

26. North Lanarkshire covers 470 km² and has a population circa 322,000 people. There are approximately 246 FTE employees mostly based within seven Fire Stations. Bellshill, Coatbridge, Cumbernauld and Motherwell are staffed by Wholetime personnel and Kilsyth, Shotts and Stepps solely by On-Call Retained staff. Some of the staff are also based at the Area Headquarters in Motherwell. The area has 10 Pumping appliances, two of which were CARPs. It also has a dedicated CSU, SRT Unit and a Prime Mover vehicle and its associated USAR equipment. Following the implementation of the HRA Strategy in September 2023 a CARP was removed from the Area and a dedicated pumping appliance replaced it.

### South Lanarkshire

27. South Lanarkshire covers 1,772 km² and has a population circa 134,000 people. There are approximately 196 FTE employees mostly based within twelve Fire Stations. Clydesmill, East Kilbride and Hamilton are staffed by Wholetime personnel whilst Lanark is staffed by a mixture of Wholetime and On-Call Retained personnel. Abington, Biggar,

Carluke, Douglas, Larkhall, Lesmahagow and Strathaven are solely staffed by On-Call Retained staff, whilst Leadhills was solely staffed by On-Call volunteers. (As previously stated Leadhills closed during the inspection). The area has 14 Pumping appliances, one of which was a CARP. It also has a dedicated Rope Rescue (RR) vehicle, SRT Unit and Prime Mover vehicles for High Volume Pumping (HVP) and Hazardous Material (HazMat). Following the implementation of the HRA Strategy in September 2023 a CARP was removed from the Area and a dedicated pumping appliance replaced it. In addition, following the implementation of the SSRP in September 2023 a 2nd Pumping Appliance was temporarily removed from Hamilton Fire Station reducing the number to 13.

# East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde (ERRI) LSO Area

### East Renfrewshire
28. East Renfrewshire covers 174 km$^2$ and has a population circa 97,000 people. There are approximately 47 FTE employees mostly based within two Fire Stations, one of which is trained in Flood Response. Both stations are Wholetime and located at Clarkston and Barrhead. The area has two pumping appliances.

### Renfrewshire
29. Renfrewshire covers 261 km$^2$ and has a population circa 180,000 people. There are approximately 133 FTE employees mostly based within three Fire Stations, one of which is Flood Response trained. Paisely and Renfrew are staffed by Wholetime personnel and Johnstone by a mixture of Wholetime and On-Call Retained personnel. The area has five Pumping appliances, one of which is a CARP. It also has a dedicated Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) and a Prime Mover vehicle and its associated Operational Support Pods. Some of the Staff are also based at the Area Headquarters in Johnstone. Following the implementation of the HRA Strategy in September 2023 the CARP was removed from the Area and a dedicated pumping appliance replaced it. The West Operations Control (OC) is also situated at Johnstone in a bespoke Control facility and is staffed by Wholetime personnel.

### Inverclyde
30. Inverclyde covers 160 km$^2$ and has a population circa 78,000 people. There are approximately 96 FTE employees mostly based within three Fire Stations, two of which are Flood Response trained. Greenock and Port Glasgow are staffed by a mixture of Wholetime and On-Call Retained personnel, whilst Gourock solely by On-Call Retained staff. The area has seven Pumping appliances, one of which is a CARP and another which is an RRU. Following the implementation of the SSRP in September 2023 a 2nd Pumping Appliance was temporarily removed from Greenock Fire Station reducing the number to six.
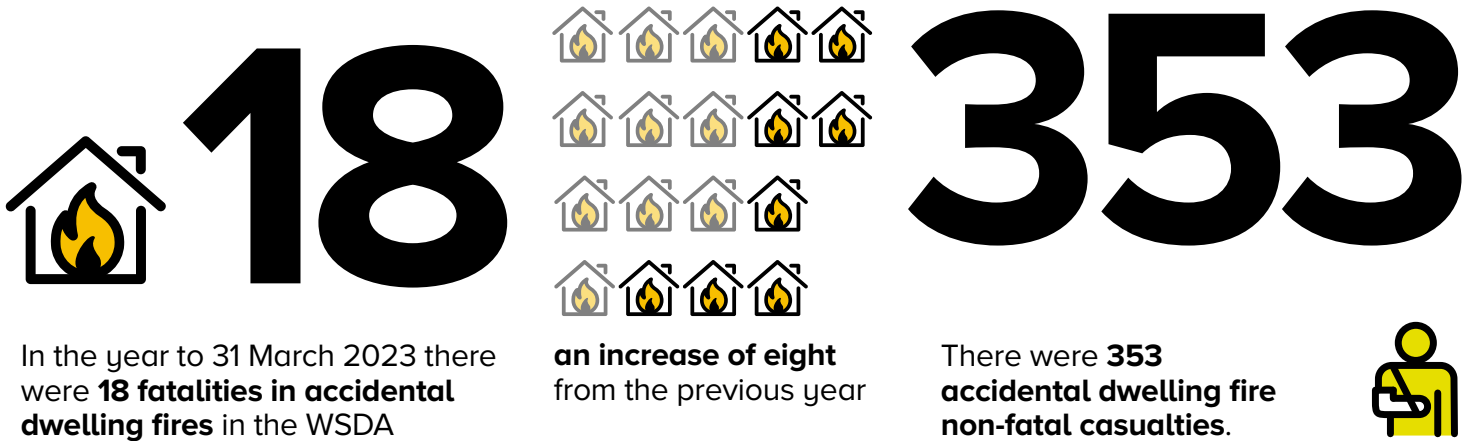
# City of Glasgow (CoG) LSO Area

### City of Glasgow
31. City of Glasgow covers 175 km$^2$ and has a population circa 635,000 people. There are approximately 518 FTE employees mostly based within eleven Fire Stations. All stations are Wholetime crewed and located at Calton, Castlemilk, Cowcaddens, Easterhouse, Govan, Knightswood, Maryhill, Pollok, Polmadie, Springburn and Yorkhill. Some of the Staff are also based at the Area Headquarters in Cowcaddens. The area has 19 Pumping appliances, one of which is a CARP. It also has two dedicated SRT Units, two Prime Mover vehicles for Mass Decontamination (MD), one HRU, two dedicated HRA and one SORU. There is also a rescue boat provided at Polmadie Fire Station and at Knightswood fire station for River Clyde water incidents.

32. Following the implementation of the HRA Strategy in September 2023 a CARP was removed from the Area and a dedicated pumping appliance replaced it. Following the implementation of the SSRP in September 2023 three 2nd Pumping Appliances were temporarily removed from Maryhill, Cowcaddens and Govan Fire Stations reducing the number to 16. Following the standardisation of Water Rescue provision on the River Clyde in September 2023, the dedicated rescue boat provision at Polmadie was altered to a dual staffing model. Lastly, the SORU was moved to East Dunbartonshire to dual purpose as a CSU.

# Overview of incident data in the WSDA

## 18

In the year to 31 March 2023 there were **18 fatalities in accidental dwelling fires** in the WSDA

**an increase of eight** from the previous year

## 353

There were **353 accidental dwelling fire non-fatal casualties**.

## 14,817

**resulted in**

### UFAS

Of the **26,522** reported fire false alarms, **57% (14,817) were unwanted fire alarm signals**.

## 23,486

### fire appliance mobilisations
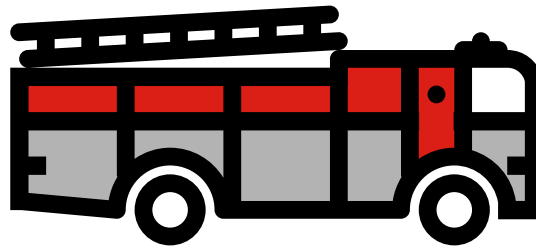
Those 14,817 UFAS calls resulted in a total of **23,486 fire appliance mobilisations** in the year to 31 March 2023.

## 47,699

### incidents in total

Fire stations in the WSDA attended a total of **47,699 incidents** in the year to 31 March 2023.
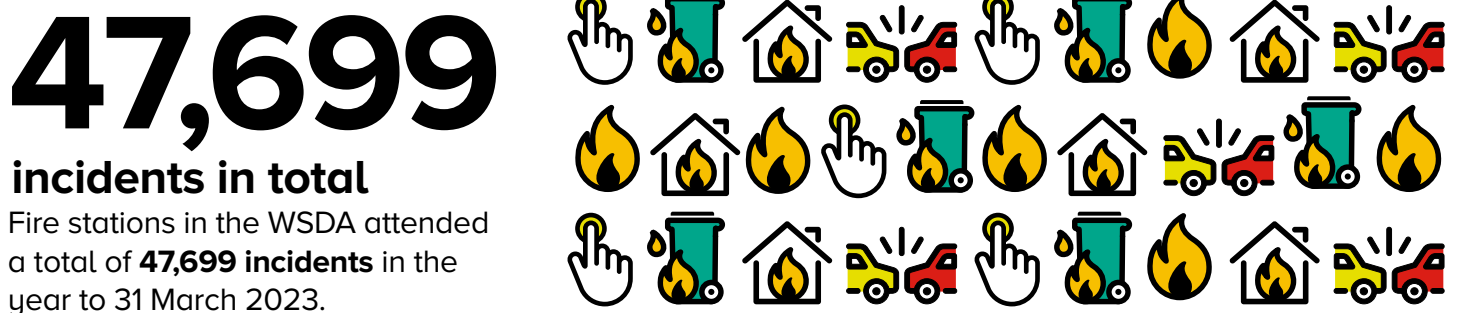
**WSDA**
Number of
Incidents Attended

**Fire Incidents**

**Non Fire Incidents**

**False Alarms**

12,968
27%

8,209
17%

26,522
56%
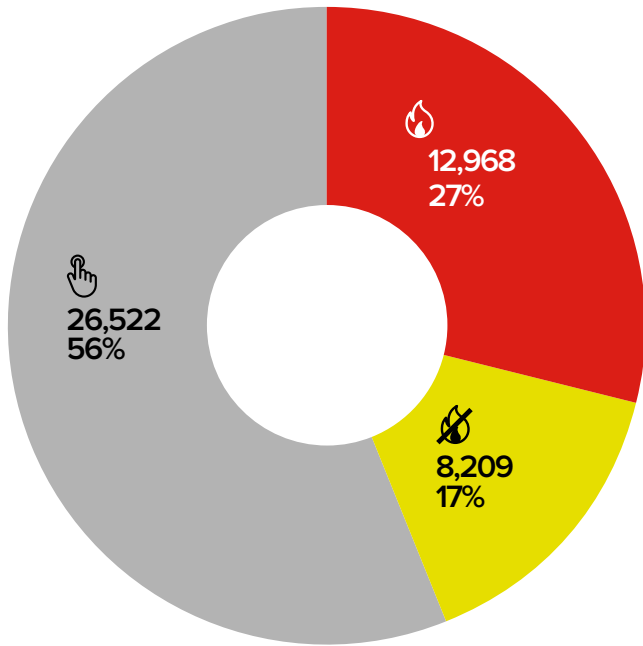
Incidents per 100,000
Population 2022-23

**WSDA**    **Scotland**

| | False Alarms | Secondary Fires | Road Traffic Collisions |
|---|---|---|---|
| WSDA | 1081.3 | 344.8 | 34.2 |
| Scotland | 1020.5 | 303.4 | 40.6 |
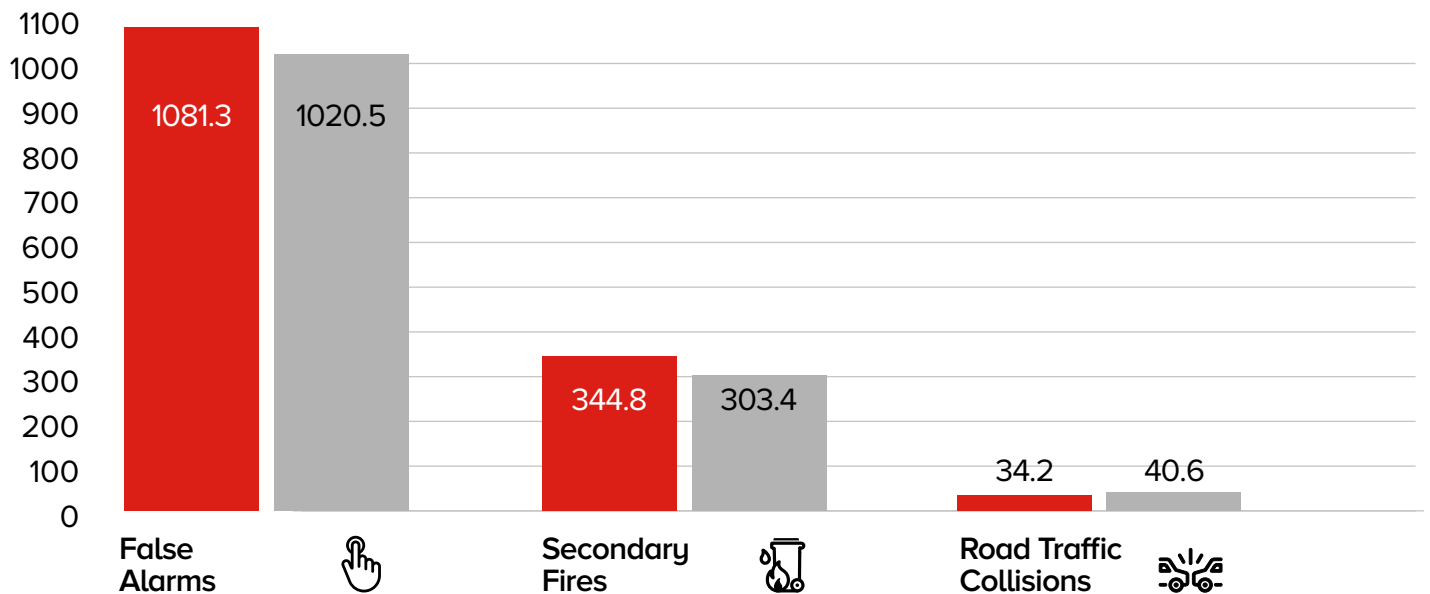
## Accidental Dwelling Fires per 100,000 Dwelling Properties 2022-23

**■ WSDA**   **■ Scotland**

| | |
|---|---|
| Accidental dwelling fires — WSDA | 159.3 |
| Accidental dwelling fires — Scotland | 143.5 |
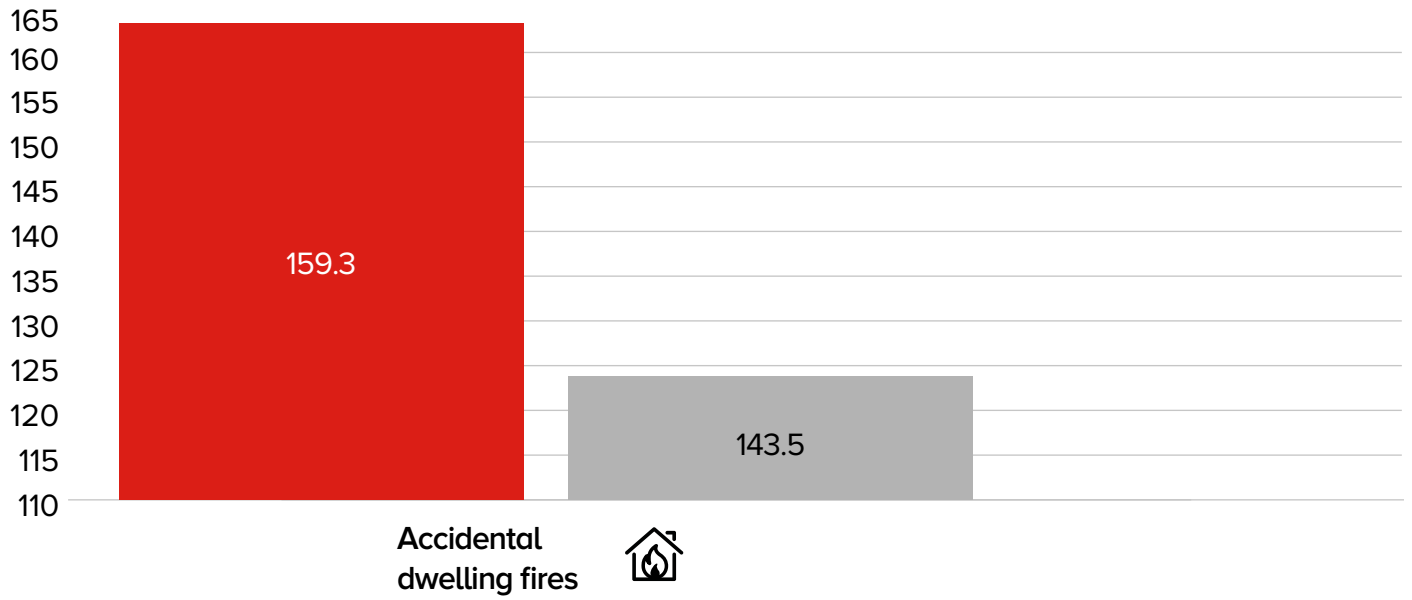
## Number of Casualties per 1,000 Fires 2022-23

**■ WSDA**   **■ Scotland**

| | WSDA | Scotland |
|---|---|---|
| Casualties | 182.5 | 181.8 |
| Fatal Casualties | 9.3 | 7.5 |
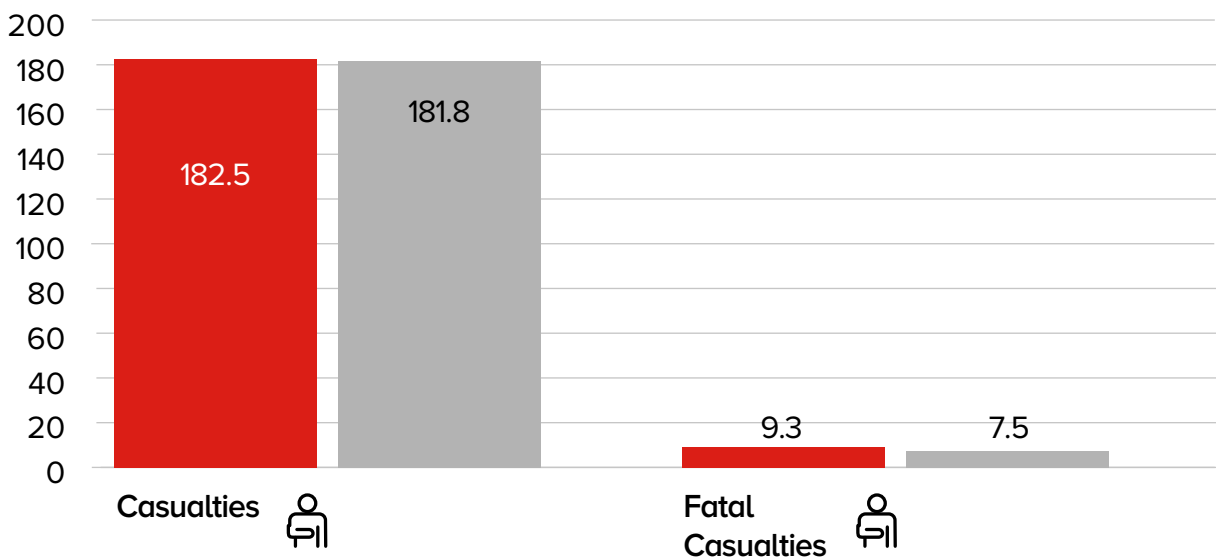
**5-Year Trend**
WSDA Incidents
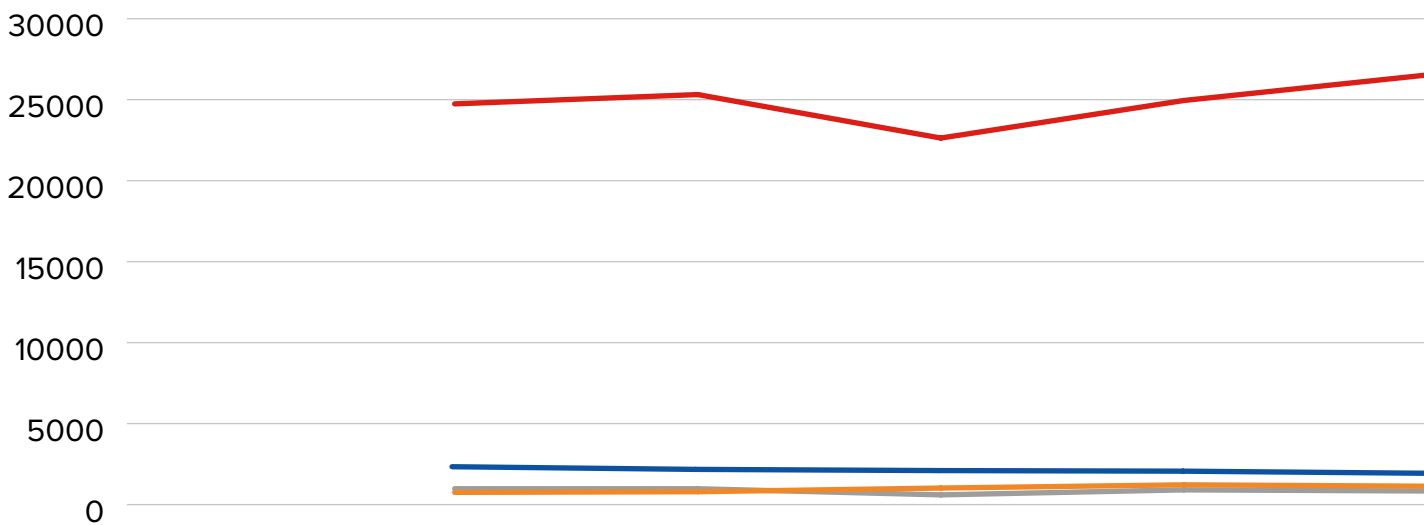
| | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 🏠 Accidental Dwelling Fires | 2338 | 2174 | 2100 | 2064 | 1934 |
| 🫗 Secondary Fires | 755 | 795 | 1022 | 1221 | 1135 |
| 💥 RTCs | 979 | 979 | 600 | 909 | 838 |
| ✋ False Alarms | 24739 | 25314 | 22630 | 24949 | 26522 |

**5-Year Trend**
WSDA Dwelling Fire Casualties
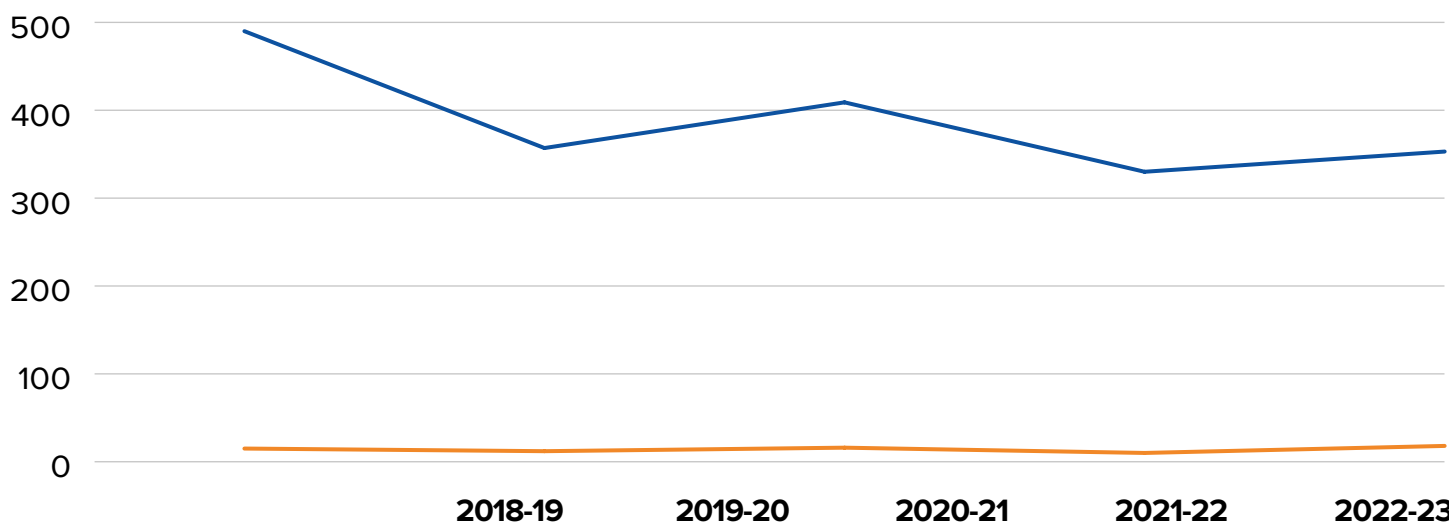
| | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dwelling Fire Casualties | 490 | 357 | 409 | 330 | 353 |
| Dwelling Fire Fatal Casualties | 15 | 12 | 16 | 10 | 18 |

## LSO Areas – Incident Activity 2022/23
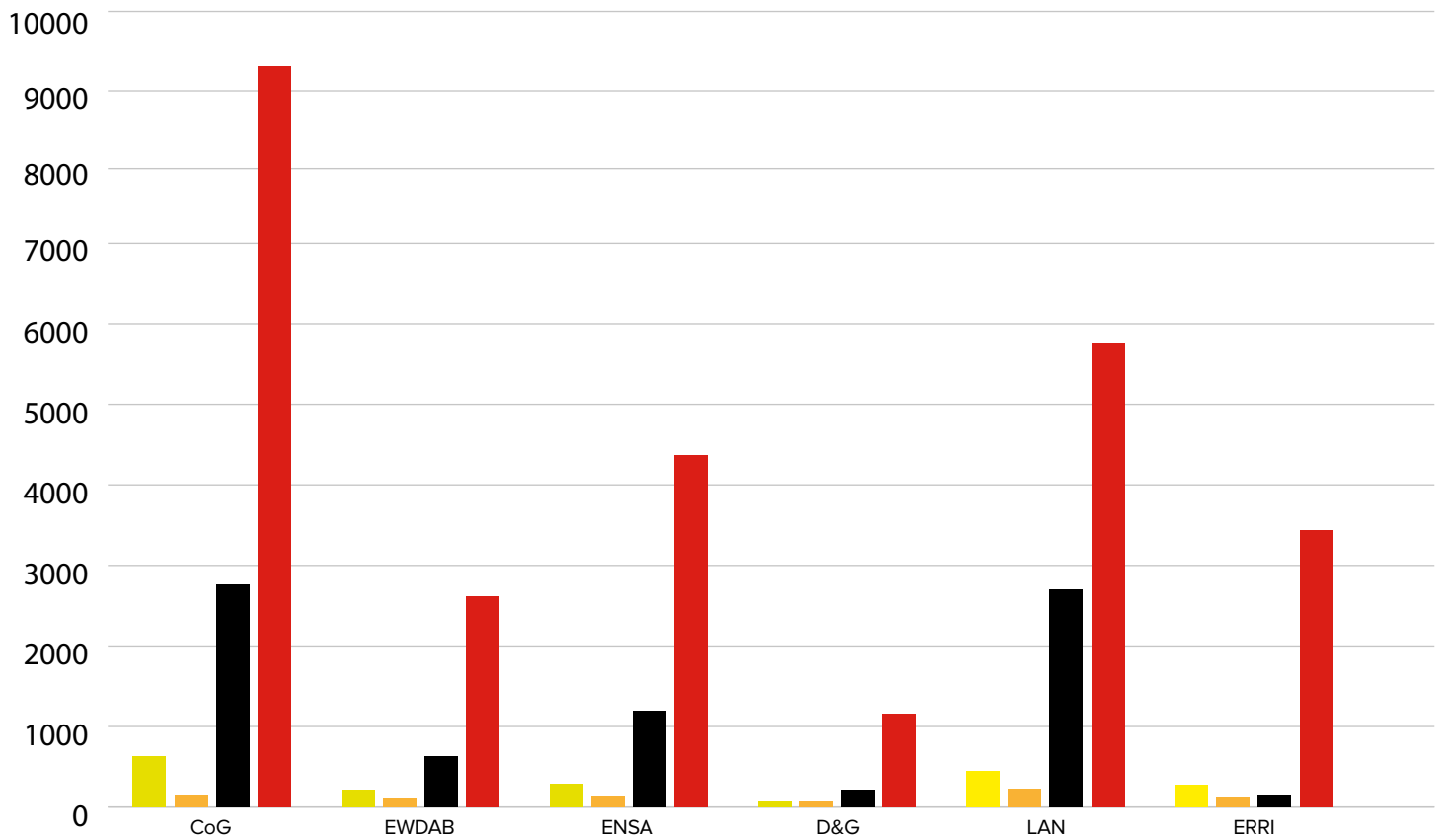


Legend:
- **Accidental dwelling fires**
- **Road Traffic Collisions**
- **Secondary Fires**
- **False Alarms**

# Summary of findings

# Prevention and Protection - How effective is the Service in the WSDA at keeping people safe and secure?

33. 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 WSDA is judged to be Satisfactory.**

**Governance**

34. The FSA requires the SFRS to publish a LFRP for each Local Authority area. The plan sets 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. As per the SFRS Good Governance Framework 2023[1] these local plans link upward to the SFRS Strategic Plan and downward to Thematic Plans and ultimately into the employee Appraisal process. It is assumed that the reference to Thematic plans in the document equate loosely to Station plans and that this allows a strong planning process to run from the top of the organisation to each employee in the WSDA.

35. We examined all the LFRP in the WSDA and found that they have assessed a good range of risks and threats and were of a good quality. 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. When assessing risk, each plan 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 as well as social and economic information. As might be expected there were similarities in the content of the plans aligned to the LSO areas.

36. We were made aware that the SFRS has made the decision to postpone the development of new LFRPs and has directed LSOs to review all existing plans instead. It is acknowledged that this decision was taken by the SLT to ensure that the local plans were not being developed in bad faith, whilst a national consultation process with future organisational change implications at local level, was underway. That said, the local staff are acutely aware that there is a 'business as usual' workload that is present and needs to be planned for and delivered. The postponement of the development of new LFRPs is causing a degree of frustration at the local level and confusion as to how planning for new routine workload should be conducted.

37. We have also found evidence that some areas in the WSDA have developed Station Plans which give a more local context and direction for activities to be carried out, and in some cases targets to be achieved for local managers. However, this was not the practice in the majority of the area, where there is historic reliance on a localised seven-week planner system, albeit this planner had fallen into a degree of disuse due to not being refreshed. There also appeared to be a level of uncertainty amongst some staff regarding the processes of planning as opposed to reporting, with the latter being relied upon heavily. We found very little evidence that suggested targets and objectives borne from the LFRPs and Organisational Strategy formed part of the appraisal process as there was little appreciation of the link.

38. Much of the issues reported in the previous paragraphs were supported by our survey. In our survey we asked the question 'Are you clear on your Department/Team's priorities'? 84% of respondents said they were clear on their workplace priorities, very similar to the 85% reported during the ESDA survey. However, this indicated that approximately 1 in 7 employees were either not sure or

unclear as to their workplace priorities. Some responses gave detail on what their priorities are, including delivering on LFRP priorities. A lesser number of respondents referred to there being unclear direction. Other reasons given for this included several priorities at any given time along with changing priorities as well as lack of communication around the priorities.

| **Recommendation 1** | We recommend that the Service provides clarity on the expected business planning processes to be adopted in the coming years, and how they should align to the Good Governance Framework. All agreed processes should then be reinvigorated and clearly communicated across all SDAs. |
|---|---|

### Prevention and Engagement

39. Preventing incidents occurring in the first place is the most effective way of mitigating the impact of fire and other incidents. Prevention is focused on the people most at risk from fire and other hazards, such as road traffic collisions etc. Each LSO area has a LPDP, which outlines the work of the Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO), Community Action Team (CAT) and front line firefighters that aligns with Service priorities and their local requirements. Prevention work, carried out by these staff groups seeks to improve the safety, health and wellbeing of communities leading to a reduction in incidents, injuries, and fatalities. The plan prepares staff to work efficiently and effectively to support the communities and partner agencies. The LALO and CAT are there to supplement, complement and enhance the work undertaken by frontline staff. Work undertaken is recorded on the Community Safety Engagement Tool (CSET).

40. There are many examples of personnel working to address social inequality and with vulnerable groups. We found evidence that staff in the WSDA were heavily involved with established methods such as Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV), Post Domestic Incident Response (PDIR) visits, Vulnerable People referral pathways, seasonal Thematic Action Plans (TAP) and that these were used extensively. There was a general frustration from many staff groups with the HFSV process. There was a perception among many of those we interviewed that it was very target driven and not risk driven. Subsequently staff felt that the wrong demographic could be visited and that the scoring system didn't necessarily allow flexibility to target the correct households within the limited capacity.

41. We found that frontline staff were generally involved with traditional engagement activity such as Bonfire Night Initiatives, Schools, Fetes, Nurseries, Gala Days etc. It was clear that much of this historic activity had been curtailed during the COVID period, that recovery was still underway, and to some extent hadn't been reinvigorated locally. We also found that the LALOs and CATs were extremely effective with engagement as well as developing innovative initiatives and that there was generally a productive, if not sometimes over reliant, relationship from frontline crews. Some good examples of community initiatives included community gardens with apiaries, Fire Reach programmes, Partnership Approach to Water Safety (PAWS), Fire Setters Interventions, Fire Skills course in His Majesty's Prison Barlinnie, Water Safety Campaigns on the River Clyde, Mugdock Park and Loch Lomond, Hoarding Presentations, Fall Referral Project and the Wallacetown Initiative etc.

| **Good Practice 1** | We were very pleased to observe innovative community safety initiatives. Staff in the WSDA should ensure that safety initiatives are recognised and that ideas are shared within the rest of the SDA and across the Service. |
|---|---|

42. We found the LALOs and CATs to be very engaged, highly motivated and generally to be well staffed. It was clear that many of the CAT had been in post for a number of years, had very good knowledge of their role and were responsible for leading or delivery of an extensive element of the WSDA engagement activity. However, some staff within these groups were disappointed as they perceived that their access to opportunities for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and formal development to a recognised qualification were extremely limited or non-

existent. They felt this was out of balance with their LALO colleagues and other sections of the SFRS staff groups. It is acknowledged that there are established communication lines between the Function and the LSO area that ensure constant liaison. However, many staff were particularly frustrated by the lack of a day to day 'go to' person from within the National Prevention and Protection Function to help with engagement queries.

43. We also found that there was uncertainty regarding the removal of the Chief Officer's Fund and the LSO's ability to deliver discretionary spend on prevention resources such as safe letter boxes and fire retardant bedding thereafter. This was a source of concern to front line crews who felt they couldn't intervene effectively when a risk to a vulnerable person had been identified. It should be noted that this fund is not a statutory requirement, however, the Service are aware of the issues and are working with local management teams to identify funding from other sources to meet local needs. There also seemed to be a great deal of frustration with CSET and that it didn't allow for 'double entries'. This meant that if two groups of staff were involved in an initiative, only one could record it for performance and reporting purposes, leading to a degree of frustration and low level anxiety between staff groups. The Service has acknowledged this as a known issue and is planning to resolve it following a review of CSET.

| Recommendation 2 | We recommend that the Service review the impact of the Chief Officer's fund being removed within the WSDA and that guidance is provided to all staff as to how this resourcing should be replaced. |
| --- | --- |

44. 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 with a unit based within each SDA but considered to be a national resource. Although based within the WSDA, the DACO has no direct control over the operation of the Fire Investigation Team (FIT). However, significant findings from fire investigations

should influence both prevention strategies, and where appropriate, efforts to improve firefighter and community safety. There should therefore be a direct link between fire investigation outcomes, incident debriefs, and operational assurance. The Service has detailed that a Fatal Fire Review Group meets nationally on a quarterly basis to review the findings of significant events. This then informs national changes to Prevention or Protection strategy. We understand that initial details of an incident of note are supplied to the LSO by the FIT and that all actions are then completed by the local management team thereafter. However, we found little evidence of a direct link between the FIT and local prevention teams in the WSDA, that had been used to develop or inform local activity or training.

**Protection**

45. The WSDA encompasses a diverse range of non-domestic premises including the care sector, businesses, heritage and industry which welcomes employees, residents, tourists and commuters alike. Such premises and workplaces can fall within the scope of the FSA and its associated Regulations and may be deemed "Relevant Premises". Those responsible for such premises are termed "Duty holders" and are required to ensure adequate fire safety measures are provided within them. This process is normally achieved through the undertaking of an appropriate Fire Safety Risk Assessment (FSRA).

46. The SFRS is the enforcing authority for the majority of Relevant Premises within Scotland and has a legal responsibility to ensure advice and guidance is given to Duty holders and where required, enforce compliance with the legislation. Protection activity is the processes 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.

47. The Service operates a system which includes carrying out proactive fire safety audits within premises, reactive post fire audits in premises and dealing with other 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 are considered to have the highest life risk from fire, such as care homes, hospitals and sleeping accommodation premises, for example hotels.

Each LSO area has a LEDP, which outlines the work of the Local Managers, Fire Safety Enforcement Officers (FSEO) and Auditing Officers (AO) that aligns with these Service priorities and their local requirements.

48. We found these protection teams to be relatively well staffed with varying degrees of competence, knowledge and experience. It is clear that the recent increase in staff attrition rates within the Service has had a detrimental impact on these teams and that the Service is proactively building them back to strength with recruitment. In some cases, this has been inhibited and exacerbated by pension abatement issues, job evaluation process as well as limited development opportunities. Broadly speaking enforcement and audit staff interviewed reported they are finding it difficult to meet the nationally derived audit targets, beyond defined framework premises, in the WSDA. There is a general feeling that a lot of the capacity has been consumed by unplanned workload such as Short Term Let (STL) licensing, Aluminium Composite Cladding Material (ACCM) concerns, and/or non-mandatory and reactive workload such as complaints and enquiries. In respect of the STL issue, many staff were particularly frustrated by a perceived lack of guidance and direction from the National Prevention and Protection Function. The Service acknowledges that the STL Licensing regime has proven challenging for consistent application across Scotland. The Service continues to develop guidance, in liaison with partners, to ensure consistent standards can be applied by staff. We also found that there was no knowledge of the Fire Precautions (Sub-surface Railway Stations) Regulations and the potential implications, despite previous HMFSI observations on a probable policy void.

49. We have reported in previous inspection reports that enforcement staff have a generally poor opinion of the current SFRS national PPED, which is used to record premises and audit outcomes. Because of historical issues with PPED, such as losing records, many staff maintain their own separate record and find they are sometimes inputting in duplicate and triplicate. Staff in the WSDA were of the same opinion and some Enforcement and Auditing 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.

50. The Service has a quarterly Operational Assurance Visit (OAV) programme for high rise domestic buildings. The statutory purpose of these visits is to provide visiting crews with familiarisation of the premises and to check duty holder compliance with fire safety requirements. These visits are normally carried out by operational crews rather than fire safety enforcement staff. However, where there are a large number of residential high-rise buildings, enforcement staff are sometimes involved in compiling any required letters to duty holders, outlining deficiencies where these are found. This is an additional workload where enforcement resources are already stretched and is acknowledged by the Service.

51. Beyond the impact on enforcement staff there is also the scale of the task for operational crews conducting the visits. CoG fire stations are particularly affected because of the number of high-rise building premises within their areas. It is understood from a previous HMFSI thematic inspection (Arrangements for Firefighting in High Rise Buildings 2022[2]) that the Service has considered the idea of a risk based OAV approach to this work. The Service informed us that the risk based approach pilot in Edinburgh has been paused and will be reconsidered upon the release of Phase 2 Grenfell report alongside an assessment of the impact that the Single Building Assessment may have upon SFRS. It is acknowledged that there is a degree of sensitivity surrounding the post Grenfell implications and that this may have legitimately inhibited development and change. That said, these visits continue to be a significant workload for certain operational crews and for some enforcement staff at a time of reduced resources.

**Recommendation 3** We recommend that the Service reassess the impact of High Rise OAVs on capacity and explore the concept of a risk based inspection approach that embraces safety and assurance whilst not being overly burdensome.

## Preparedness

52. 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.

53. The provision of up-to-date and accurate information to its firefighters is important in effectively responding to incidents when they do occur. We saw varying quantities of available information across the LSO areas. There are processes in place for firefighters to collect and review Operation Intelligence (OI); however we noted that in areas covered by On-Call appliances, firefighters from those stations were less likely to be involved in the process. There is also a heavy reliance on the On-Call Support Watch Commander to do this job in some areas, which was beneficial in respect of utilising the additional capacity but negated the positive benefits of crews collecting and understanding hazards and risk within their own station area.

54. We also note that the procedures for collecting and reviewing information on OI were a mixture of proactive and reactive processes which ranged from informal drive-by to formal liaison and communication with Council Planning officers. The processes seemed to be suffering post Covid, much like community safety engagement. We were not convinced that any system employed throughout the WSDA was infallible and that all relevant OI had been collected and reviewed.

55. We are also aware of continued ongoing issues with the automatic updating of the demountable tablet device and the ability to create new OI records. This would seem to be a national problem and one that the Service has been trying to resolve, with a twice weekly manual update process in place as an interim solution. In 2019, HMFSI published a Thematic Inspection report of the management and provision of risk information. In that report we highlighted that there were issues about 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.

56. In addition to the updating issues, we found that in general, the device was underused by firefighters mainly due to the problems associated in 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. However, the mapping function does not have traditional 'Sat Nav' capability to plot a route to the incident, which is something that front line firefighters said they would find useful. We found that crews tend to use their own personal mobile phones for plotting a route to a location. We did find evidence that the Service has started to issue new mobile phones for appliances which have data access and OI information such as Road Traffic Collision (RTC) vehicle data.

57. Notwithstanding the issues detailed previously, we are aware, through a project demonstration, that the Service is currently developing and rolling out a new demountable tablet system, with new hardware and software, that will enhance and replace the current systems. There is a clearly defined plan for this project, which is scrutinised through the change committee. The SFRS is a pathfinder Service for the UK FRS, having secured significant funding to support this technological advance. Current estimates within the project timeline, are that the replacement of mobile data terminals and demountable tablets across all response vehicles, will take approximately three years to complete. We see this project as an extremely positive improvement but concerns regarding the current processes, systems and hardware remain extant.

58. Business Continuity Planning (BCP) is based on best practice and guidance under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA). The CCA requires an organisation to make arrangements

and take cognisance of potential and foreseeable hazards and threats to business and that arrangements are in place to mitigate any impact. It is the responsibility of the WSDA DACO (Head of Function) to maintain, audit and exercise individual Business Continuity Management Plans (BCMPs), in conjunction with other functions whose plans may have an interdependent impact. We found strong evidence that BCMPs have been developed for each workplace within the WSDA and that these have been reviewed within a reasonable timeframe. The standard of these plans was very consistent and thorough. We were assured by the Service that these plans are exercised within all LSO areas on a regular basis.

| **Good Practice 2** | We were very pleased to observe proactive management and development of BCMPs for each of the workplaces within the WSDA. |
|---|---|

59. SOPs are generic operating procedures, mainly developed from National Operational Guidance (NOG). We found staff were aware of SOPs, as well as other operational guidance, and understood where they could be accessed either within the workplace or on the incident ground. Most staff seemed very comfortable with the format and content as an aid to strong incident command, whilst others found them a bit cumbersome. Some staff were particularly frustrated by the consultation and implementation change process of these documents. They intimated that change could often happen whilst they were on leave and that refamiliarising themselves quickly could be difficult, considering the changes were often not highlighted and that there was a need sometimes to reread the whole procedure. This was particularly pronounced within Johnstone Operations Control (JOC). The Service have subsequently detailed that changes to SOPs are highlighted in red and sent out for a period of 28 days familiarisation negating these concerns, however, it would appear that staff awareness of this process is limited.

60. In addition, we found little evidence of the development of Site Specific Operational Procedures (SSOP) of known hazards and threats that were specific to the area. The lack of specific guidance for dealing with incidents in the Clyde Tunnel and Glasgow Underground were cited as examples, as historically there had been an 'Operations Technical Note' in the legacy service. The Service confirmed that SSOP's are no longer being developed and informed us that the Operations Function are currently developing a new document strategy, which will include operating procedures supported by manuals. We are also aware that the Service has developed enhanced incident response plans and OI for some specific hazards. However, we are still unsure whether all hazards within the WSDA that may require specific operating procedures outwith generic standard operational guidance have them in place.

| **Recommendation 4** | We recommend that the WSDA review the hazards within their area and confirm that specific operational procedures have been developed, if it is deemed that they are not covered entirely by generic standard operational procedures. |
|---|---|

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

61. 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 WSDA is judged to be Satisfactory.**

**Staffing**

62. 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 WSDA there are three basic crewing models, Wholetime (WT) and On-Call (which is new nomenclature for the Retained Duty System (RDS) and Volunteer Duty Systems (VDS)). WT stations are crewed by fulltime firefighters working a five watch duty system 5WDS. 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.

63. A 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. For WT, the SFRS 5WDS is based on a 10-week, continually repeating, shift cycle. The 5WDS is designed to predict as far as practicable, where surpluses and deficiencies will occur, and realign resources accordingly. To ensure the duty system and WT firefighter availability operates efficiently the Service has a national Central Staffing (CS) department. CS is responsible for arranging the number of operational personnel on duty at each Wholetime fire station. This is done by the management of leave, use of overtime, the use of the additional out of pattern roster reserve days (orange days) and the use of detached duty staff.

64. To assist the CS team and manage absence the Service also employs an appliance withdrawal strategy. Staff reported that due to the shortage of personnel there have been daily withdrawal of appliances in some areas in the WSDA, normally the second pump at an affected station. When this happens, 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, those stations don't normally form part of the withdrawal strategy and are broadly unaffected. This however places an added burden on other surrounding stations. Prior to the COVID pandemic, appliances in stations with two pumps were crewed to a minimum of five firefighters on the first appliance and four on the second and at one pump stations with a minimum of five firefighters. In response to the pandemic, crewing was reduced to a minimum of four on all appliances and this remained the standard for that period and beyond.

65. Service provided statistics demonstrated staffing levels at 93% FTE of the TOM year ending the 31 March 2023, equating to a deficit of about 100 firefighters. We found that this reduced crewing level frustrated operational firefighters as it could lead to increased detached duties, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) transport issues, consistent and regular appliance withdrawal, overtime fatigue, difficulty in getting time off in lieu etc. That said, latterly in our fieldwork, due to the operational changes brought about by SSRP, HRA Strategy and the rationalisation of Water Rescue in September 2023 we found that WT operational crews were generally established to or around the TOM. Although there were still instances of appliance withdrawal and appliances being staffed to four, we found that the picture had in the main improved and there was reduced negative feedback regarding this particular issue.

66. As detailed, Detached Duty (DD) involves personnel temporarily working from a fire station other than their home station to make up a crewing shortfall. The Service has reported that following the modernisation changes in September 2023, there has been an overall decrease in DDs across the WSDA and Scotland as a whole. However, staff reported that in some locations DD had increased following the September changes and that this may be mainly caused by the displacement of staff and consequently local skills shortages in fire appliance driving and specialisms. Frustration and concerns raised by staff, were the disruption to organised training and completion of SVQ development with their own watch and station, restricted ability to get time off as well as general welfare issues surrounding the constant additional travel and impact on home life. In addition, there were many instances of Watches only having one or two appliance drivers and the same person constantly driving a fire appliance, thus reducing their opportunity to carry out other tasks. We were told of instances of individual drivers spending long periods of time, without regularly running in the position as a Breathing Apparatus (BA) Operator. The limitations of skills also exacerbated the fact that Drivers and Specialists find it very difficult to get time off in lieu and that this group of employees would seem to be disproportionately affected.

| Recommendation 5 | We recommend that the Service review its Fire Appliance Driver and Specialist capacity in the WSDA to understand the areas of most pressure and apply mitigation, which allows firefighters to practice variety in the role on a more regular basis. |
| --- | --- |

67. For On-Call staffing levels, the SFRS normally has a TOM of between 10 to 20 firefighters (or 1000% to 2000%) depending on the size of the station, the number of appliance and any specialism etc. The percentage system allows management to employ more people on a reduced contract, thus more people, with the expectation that this will increase availability. Service provided statistic demonstrated staffing levels of between 67% and 83% for RDS and 66% and 70% for VDS, depending on the LSO area. An outlier to these figures was the low staffing levels (29%) at Leadhills Fire Station in South Lanarkshire, which was ultimately subject to closure following a public consultation process. The staffing levels, which are far from ideal, are indicative of the ongoing issues that the UK Fire Service has with recruitment and retention in the On-Call duty systems, which will be dealt with later in the report. In the WSDA, the Service has increased the use of Dual Contracts by 11% from 2022 to 2023 and this efficient and effective use of existing firefighters should be commended.

**Availability**

68. The Service monitors the availability of On-Call appliances electronically. Like other areas across Scotland and the wider UK there are occasions, particularly during the day, when an On-Call appliance may not be 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 would automatically not be mobilised to an incident. In these circumstances the next nearest available appliance would be mobilised. Availability is usually higher during the night and at weekends. 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, particularly during the day.

69. The total average On-Call availability within the WSDA was just over 77% for the year ending 31 March 2023 with one LSO area averaging a low of 67% and one LSO area averaging a high of 86%. Outside of the average availability there were examples of some appliances having very poor availability on a routine basis. There could be many factors for these differences such as demographic, geography, industry, commerce, etc. and each area has unique issues and as such, comparison is difficult. We found recruitment and retention and consequential reduced appliance availability to be a continued area of challenge for the WSDA, which is discussed in more detail later in the report.

70. We also noted that poor availability had an inevitable impact on Wholetime appliances and staff. We were provided with numerous examples of WT appliance routinely travel

large distances to cover 'cluster' areas and to provide availability in a remote rural location for a period of time, normally through a day shift. The impact on these WT personnel was significant with reduced fire cover in urban areas, lost training time, inefficient use of fuel and resources, lost operational preparedness capacity and increased road risk management as examples given. Additionally, staff raised concern that some On-Call staff within the WSDA were still on different contracts with different expectations of availability depending on the legacy Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) area. This was a source of frustration and there was a sense of unfairness, given the period of time passed since the inception of the new Service.

71. On-Call personnel use a system called Gartan to individually manage their own availability. At several On-Call fire stations personnel will also informally and collectively manage their personal availability, to ensure that an appliance will remain available. An example, used at numerous stations, included running a two watch system, which allowed scheduled time off for personal issues whilst still guaranteeing appliance availability. Other WSDA availability solutions included the use of 50% dual staffing contracts for Wholetime personnel, use of a bank hour system and employing the On-Call support Watch Commander (WC) to fill any foreseeable gaps. Staff observed that these systems were effective to a degree but were not sufficient to attract and retain personnel in some rural areas.

> **Good Practice 3**
>
> We were very pleased to observe proactive management of On-Call Availability and examples of innovative local staffing solutions, such as the increased use of dual staffing, which made the system more user friendly.

72. We did note that each LSO management team was continually monitoring the availability levels and were working hard, within the constraints of Finance and Conditions of Service, with the local crews to maintain and improve availability using innovative solutions. Unfortunately, on occasions, this monitoring was perceived as being overbearing and punitive with crews resenting the subsequent management. It should be noted that there are many stations in the WSDA where the availability of appliances is very good and the personnel at these stations should be commended for maintaining these high standards.

**Community Fire Stations**

73. The Service introduced an Asset Management Policy 23-28 in February 2024. The policy aims to support every member of the workforce by ensuring they have the right equipment, fleet and property assets to do their job to the best of their ability. There has been significant progress in developing this strategic approach with work undertaken on the creation of Strategic Asset Management Plans for equipment, fleet and property. The Service published the Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMPP): Property 23-28[3], which sets out how the SFRS aims to achieve a modern and fit for purpose property estate that supports the effective delivery of services across the whole organisation. The Strategy details many identified issues with Fire Stations throughout Scotland and highlights many as not having minimum toilet facilities, dedicated drying facilities, rest or canteen facilities, dedicated locker rooms, sufficient showering facilities, dedicated water supply, dignified facilities and appropriate contaminant control measures.

> **Good Practice 4**
>
> We were pleased to observe the development of the Asset Management Policy and SAMPs as they provide clearer direction with regards to future asset investment, development and review requirements.

74. The Service has also had a Property Condition Survey carried out on each fire station in the WSDA from approximately 2019 to 2023. The surveys give SFRS's managers information regarding the assessed condition of the fabric and services of the building, and to a degree, indicative costs for any identified refurbishment. A Corporate Landlord model details each station's rating regarding condition and suitability. With regards to condition, out of 127 Fire Stations, the WSDA had 44% in satisfactory condition, 54% in poor condition and 2% in

bad condition. With regard to suitability, 17% were good, 21% were satisfactory, 46% were poor and 16% were bad. This information generally allows local property managers to prioritise improvement work. However, Capital and Revenue expenditure priorities on premises refurbishment and repair is a national matter, in consultation with LSO area staff.

75. Our feedback from staff regarding their workplace generally resonated with the SAMPP assessments and issues of concern. Specifically, staff reported concerns regarding lack of dignified facilities, drying facilities, PPE storage areas, appliance exhaust ventilation, BA Set servicing areas and difficulty in controlling and eliminating exposure to contaminants. In addition, we also found concerns surrounding training towers being out of use due to pest contamination, poor broadband connectivity and limited computer provision. We also found that many staff, especially in remote rural stations, were extremely frustrated by the limited provision of local BA cylinder recharging facilities. In many cases it was reported that this caused unnecessary appliance movements, difficulty in transporting spare cylinders and that the protection of the cylinder resource sometimes caused a reluctance to properly train in BA.

76. Many of the issues observed in the previous paragraph were supported by our Survey. We posed the question 'How would you rate the premises you work in and the facilities available?' The mean average rating for this question was 6.45 in the WSDA, compared to 5.76 in the ESDA, so very similar. Positive responses included reference to the building being well-maintained, having good facilities, being "fit for purpose", having had recent upgrades (including new internal doors, kitchens, re-painted). The lower scoring responses included narrative which includes reference to; old, tired buildings; a lack of female/dignified facilities; faulty boilers affecting heating/hot water as well as RAAC panelling and consequent issues, including acro-props within the building. In comparison to the ESDA survey results, there is significant reference in WSDA survey results to contamination challenges with properties being a barrier to adequate decontamination being referenced commonly. This level of response may be due to the growing levels of awareness of reported contamination

issues affecting the fire sector as a whole. The WSDA survey responses include reference to the word contamination, contaminant or decontamination 210 times (average of 0.35 times per respondent) compared to 60 times in the ESDA survey responses (average of 0.19 times per respondent).

**Recommendation 6** We recommend that the Service reviews the WSDA Fire Station condition surveys to understand the areas of most pressure regarding dignified facilities and contaminants to explore any possible interim mitigation measures.

77. Four of the fire stations within the WSDA have roof areas constructed of RAAC, which represents the 2% in Bad condition detailed previously. RAAC was used extensively in the construction of flat roofed public 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 specific stations affected in the WSDA are Stewarton, Cumbernauld, Helensburgh and Milngavie. The SFRS has undertaken a risk assessment and where necessary remedial action to provide temporary structural support for the affected roofs in these workplaces. Prioritisation of which stations will be remediated first is a national strategic decision and is obviously dependent on access to capital funding, which is detailed within its risk based capital investment report. Overall, the situation will have a significant financial impact for the Service, beyond that already spent on temporary support and investigation work.

78. The SAMPP details the projected Capital Programme and it is noted that all four RAAC stations feature in this future planning to a greater or lesser extent. However, it is unclear how long it will take to remedy the defects within the WSDA. As can be seen in the image below the working environment for the staff at some of these stations is less than ideal, and this has been the case for a number of years. Although the SAMPP broadly sets out the Service's intentions for addressing the defects, it is of concern that this has not progressed significantly since the SFRS Board was first made aware of it in 2019. Staff at

those stations reported that it affects their engagement with the Service and community as well as their general morale. These staff should be commended for their ongoing commitment to working in such a challenging environment, for an extended period of time.

| Recommendation 7 | We recommend that the Service resolves the RAAC roofing problems at the affected stations as a matter of urgency. |
|---|---|



*Image 1: Stewarton Fire Station, Appliance Bay*

79. A number of fire stations in the WSDA have had refurbishment work undertaken to provide enhanced fire safety, windows replaced, doors replaced, more suitable dignified facilities for staff, solar panels installed and improved heating systems etc., which is all to be welcomed. In most case where upgrade work had been carried out staff were very appreciative of the effort although on occasion frustrated by the standard of work completed and the prioritisation. It is understood that the Service has legal duties and responsibility to procurement and contract management, which may restrict practice. That said, some of the staff interviewed reported that they felt the use of the national property maintenance contract and perceived centralisation of decisions and budget control made the process inefficient and ineffective. It is understood that there is a healthy liaison link between

Property and the WSDA but the perceived lack of local control and responsibility for LSO management teams was a source of frustration.

| Recommendation 8 | We recommend that the Service review the existing practices and processes within the WSDA for property maintenance with the Central Property partner in order that increased local administration and responsibility of property be explored. |
|---|---|

### Fleet

80. The Service published the Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMPF): Fleet 22-27[4], which sets out how the SFRS aims to design and implement an efficient, reliable, resilient and fit for purpose fleet solution for services across the whole organisation. The Strategy details many identified issues with the Service's fleet and looks to plan for change. 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. Some issues identified within the Strategy are the need to improve consultation and engagement, improve the standard of allocated and spare appliances and deliver the West Asset Resource Centre (ARC) development.

81. The appliances allocated to the area are of a varying age and are generally being kept in good condition. Staff were generally content with their appliance and understood the budget constraints the Service has to work within. There were instances where, due to either age or configuration, appliances were in a less than satisfactory condition, but these were limited. Of greater concern to staff was the poor condition of many spare appliances and the lack of equipment provided on them.

82. Major servicing of WSDA appliances is undertaken at the West ARC workshops managed by the central Fleet Function. There is also limited use of local maintenance contracts for particularly remote rural stations. Some staff reported that the use of a predominantly centralised fleet maintenance system and perceived centralisation of decisions and budget control made the process

more inefficient and ineffective. Examples of issues included the use of local staff capacity to move appliances to a central point, increased cost of fuel for appliance movements, increased road risk as well as extended periods without vehicles due to logistics and travel. It is understood that there is an established liaison link between Fleet and the WSDA but the lack of local control and responsibility for LSO management teams was a continued source of frustration. Local management teams felt that they had limited influence on prioritising appliance maintenance and replacement and could not escalate or resolve issues effectively.

| Recommendation 9 | We recommend that the Service review the existing practices and processes within the WSDA for vehicle management with the Central Fleet partner in order that increased local administration and responsibility of vehicles be explored. |
| --- | --- |

83. An issue that was raised with us on several occasions, regarding newer appliances, related to the stowage of 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. 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. However, these ongoing issues seems to have been exacerbated by the addition of Smoke Hoods to BA Sets, which is making the equipment bulkier. We were also informed that the use of the locker at operational incidents could be problematic depending on the road layout and parking configuration, sometimes adding anxiety to an already stressful situation. The health and safety rationale for the locker was well understood by operational staff but nonetheless was universally disliked with other potential solutions frequently offered.

84. We were consistently given feedback regarding specialist appliances. Staff were concerned regarding the age and condition of national resilience assets such as the DIM vehicle

and MD units. There was also concern raised regarding the lack of dedicated CSUs and some staff expressed a view that combining with the SORU was not appropriate or fit for purpose. There was also concern raised regarding the HRA Strategy. Staff generally understood the rationalisation process and that the appliances had been removed following an analysis process. However, given that there are now fewer appliances, concern was raised regarding the instances and amount of time the remaining appliances were off the run due to mechanical issues. In some instances, staff gave examples of appliances being unavailable for lengthy periods on end due to delays in processing and getting spare parts. Staff reported that there didn't appear to be a replacement or resilience strategy for this scenario and that there were often instances of no HRA available within urban areas of risk, for extended periods. The Service accepted that there had been instances of appliances being unavailable but stressed that this had been due in part to supply chain, spare part and training issues.

85. It is understood that there is an established user intelligence group process for appliance development with staff representation and that the SAMPF has looked to improve engagement and consultation. However, staff generally felt that there was still limited 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.

**Equipment**

86. The Service published the Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMPE): Equipment 23-28[5], which details how the Service will manage, maintain and develop equipment assets. The Strategy details many identified issues with the Service's equipment and looks to plan for change. The SFRS's national Equipment Function manages the procurement and servicing of equipment used within the area, allocating and replacing equipment on the basis of a national policy. Some issues identified within the strategy were the need to improve collaboration, consultation and engagement, improve the standard of allocated equipment and PPE, and to merge stores into the West ARC development.

87. Servicing of WSDA equipment is undertaken at the West ARC workshops managed by the central Equipment Function. Staff reported that the use of a predominantly centralised equipment maintenance system and perceived centralisation of decisions and budget control made the process more inefficient and ineffective. Examples of issues included the limited stock of spare equipment, use of local staff capacity to move equipment to a central point, increased cost of fuel for vehicle movements, increase road risk (MoRR) as well as extended periods without equipment due to logistics and lengthy travel. It is understood that there is an established liaison link between Equipment and the WSDA but the lack of local control and responsibility for LSO management teams was a source of frustration. Local management teams felt that they had limited influence on prioritising equipment procurement, maintenance and replacement and could not escalate or resolve issues effectively.

| **Recommendation 10** | We recommend that the Service reviews the existing practices and processes for equipment provision and maintenance within the WSDA with the Central Equipment partner in order that increased local administration and responsibility of equipment can be realised. |
| --- | --- |

88. 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 WSDA is predominantly paper based, we found few issues with the records and equipment was generally well tested and recorded.

| **Recommendation 11** | We recommend that the Service standardise the recording of equipment testing with a national electronic system as soon as possible. |
| --- | --- |

89. There are specialist rescue capabilities, such as water and rope rescue, based at a number of stations within the WSDA. The disposition of these resources is decided nationally and designed to give communities across Scotland equitable access. As detailed previously, some of the capability, such as DIM and MD, was introduced across the UK following the terrorist attacks in the USA in 2001. As with the vehicles mentioned previously, some of the equipment introduced alongside, was said to be at the end of its useful operation due to wear and tear and having had no asset refresh.

90. 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. We were also made aware of a perceived shortage of spare cylinders in some areas; this was said to impact on training. This was particularly acute in remote areas, as crews were keeping charged cylinders available for operational use because there is limited access to cylinder recharging compressors. In some areas fire appliances are being used to move cylinders and concern was raised regarding the safety, economic and environmental impact of such an approach.

91. The WSDA has a number of Volunteer On-Call stations, some of which are very remote, that are equipped with BA. It is known that BA is a very onerous skill for the organisation to deliver and for individuals to maintain competence, particularly so in volunteer stations where the employment contract is less structured. There are also very strict procedures to allow safe deployment as well as high standards for testing and maintenance. We found that some of these stations were very well staffed and seemed more able to meet these requirements, whilst there were others where it was more challenging. We feel there may be a risk of trying to sustain this skill within some communities, if operational deployment, training and testing standards can't be sufficiently maintained.

**Recommendation 12**

We recommend that the Service reviews the existing BA provision within Volunteers Stations to satisfy itself that training, testing and maintenance is being conducted to an acceptable standard and that the capability can be deployed safely within existing policy and operational guidance.

92. 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 Service is in the process of replacing the current radios with a new digital version. At the time of our fieldwork the project had been running for several years with the roll out of equipment due to be completed by May 2024. However, the 'go live' date has yet to be determined.

93. We were advised of the difficulties experienced by some personnel 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 should be given clear consideration.

94. We were made aware of On-Call appliances, based at WT stations, not receiving equipment on the basis that a WT pump based at the same station has the equipment in question. Staff felt that this situation fails to recognise that the WT appliance may not routinely 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 (TIC), leading to a possible delay.

95. It was also a source of frustration to staff that given the rise in forced entry incidents, bespoke equipment to assist this type of incident such as a power drill, reciprocating saw and door opener hadn't been provided, after repeated requests. Apart from the equipment mentioned above, personnel were satisfied with some of the level and quality of operational equipment

supplied. Appliance Ladders and Powered Rescue Equipment (PRE) were of particular note and received a lot of positive feedback.

96. It was noted that within the D&G LSO area there is SWaH equipment, procedures and training in place that differ from the remainder of the WSDA. Risks locally identified for the area and the Service include varying training standards and equipment, fade of legacy knowledge and skills, maintenance of competency and poor interoperability of crews. These risks have the potential to impact upon crew and public safety as well as compromising the operational response to incidents involving height.

**Recommendation 13**

We recommend that the WSDA reviews the existing SWaH provision within D&G and develop an improvement plan for consistent maintenance of skills and service delivery.

97. Many of the issues observed in the previous paragraphs were supported by our survey. We asked the question 'How would you rate the equipment (and if applicable PPE) you are provided with, to carry out your work?' The mean average rating for this question was 6.98 in the WSDA, compared to 7.27 in the ESDA, so very similar. There is a trend of negative comments regarding BA Sets, highlighting an understanding that BA Sets are becoming defective more often and that they are "old", at their "end of life", "10 years old" etc. There are some comments highlighting excessive times taken for workshops to turn around both defective equipment and appliances. There are a number of references highlighting frustrations with the time it appears to be taking to roll out the PRE to replace Hydraulic Rescue Equipment (HRE). There was also reference to requirement for more hand held radios and of a better quality, and there should be a radio for every BA Set.

**Personal Protective Equipment**

98. Staff generally provided very good feedback regarding the standard of Structural PPE. In the main, we found this kit to be well maintained and clean, although there were limited instances of soiled gear and poor record keeping. Most staff were extremely aware of contamination issues and from that point of view there would seem to be a positive

awareness developing. Disappointingly, nearly all fire stations reported that they felt that the national laundry contract and processes were very frustrating and potentially inhibited a positive contaminants culture. There were numerous instances of staff reporting PPE taking lengthy periods to be returned from cleaning, PPE not being picked up and PPE simply disappearing with no notification as to why. This would seem to have led to a culture where firefighters are reluctant to send PPE away for cleaning more regularly than the minimum. That said, the Service are confident that the standard contract is meeting the agreed triggers for PPE turnaround at the point of arrival for laundry. However, it did highlight issues with the repair contract capacity and process at station as historic challenges.

99. The issues identified with the national laundry contract seem to have been exacerbated by the limitations of spare PPE stock within the Service. We were provided with numerous examples of personnel having difficulty identifying and accessing spare PPE following incidents. These issues were compounded by the perceived lack of a resilient and robust 24/7 process for the National Equipment Function to support operations out of normal office hours. That said, we are aware that at a recent Training Safety and Assurance Board (TSAB) the Service indicated that consideration was being given to additional capital investment with a view to increasing the amount of spare PPE stock. Such an investment could help to alleviate these issues.

| **Recommendation 14** | We recommend that the Service investigate the application of the national laundry contract processes and look to explore improvements within the WSDA. |
|---|---|

100. A frequent comment made by crews was that the Structural PPE provided was good, but not the most suitable for use at Wildfire incidents. Structural PPE can cause the wearer to overheat and the footwear can be uncomfortable when walking for long periods over rough terrain. As such, it is generally recognised that lighter weight wildfire PPE is more appropriate for these types of incidents. It is understood that the Service has a Wildfire Strategy, and that lightweight PPE is being

distributed to those stations designated as Wildfire Stations. We were made aware of numerous examples of non-wildfire stations attending wildfire incidents regularly and for long periods of time, which is consistent with commentary made within the HMFSI thematic inspection (Climate Change: managing the operational impact on fires and other weather-related emergencies 2023[6]). Some firefighters talked about their feet being "shredded" during the peak of wildfire season and buying their own blister plasters and medication to help get through the worst, which is clearly not an ideal situation.

101. An element of staff reported that they were unhappy with the quality of the non-operational uniform at the moment and that there was a feeling that the standard had reduced considerably year on year. Examples included, reduced quality of material, need for more regular replacement, inconsistent sizing, poor fitting and not being fit for purpose. There was a sense that the uniform was important and helped them connect with the Service, with a sense of pride. A number of those we interviewed felt that the uniform was being bought on a predominantly cost basis and consideration as to identity, functionality and quality was very much secondary. The Service's financial position was understood but many firefighters thought that the balance of considerations wasn't good. It was disappointing to observe the impact of this feeling on staff engagement and morale.

102. Many of the issues observed in the previous paragraphs were supported by our Survey. As detailed previously, we asked the question 'How would you rate the equipment (and if applicable PPE) you are provided with, to carry out your work?'. The mean average rating for this question was 6.98 in the WSDA, compared to 7.27 in the ESDA, so very similar. Generally, the comments were positive around the quality of structural PPE. Although there was reference to two sets of fire kit not being enough for crews, along with delays in getting spare kit and laundry turnaround times, which linked to decontamination issues highlighted in previous paragraphs. There were also mention of limitations of structural fire kit and this not being suitable for wildfires. Lastly staff mentioned the uniform and reference to it being a poor quality.

**Training and Exercising**

103. The Service should routinely train and exercise internally and with multi-agency partners externally. Although too numerous to mention the WSDA has a number of significant hazards and risks that meet the criteria of Nuclear and Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) establishments, which require site operators to test emergency plans. Also, within the WSDA there are hazards associated with sub-surface transport, places of incarceration, places of care, transport infrastructure as well as major industrial, residential and commercial premises, which could all require scheduled exercising. It is understood that the impact and response to the COVID pandemic did have a negative effect on the ability to train and exercise. However with the removal of restrictions it is believed this activity is returning to normality. We found strong evidence that the Service is taking part in joint exercising and on many occasions, the Service within the WSDA was leading the partnership approach on behalf of the LA. The Service within the WSDA has a very positive reputation in this respect and is a trusted and active partner.

104. In respect to internal exercising, we found some evidence of Station personnel developing and conducting exercises offsite. Where these exercises had been delivered, they were well received by station personnel who seemed enthused by the innovative and diverse training. Staff reported that some limitations to this local offsite exercising were in part due to the lack of confidence to complete the planning, risk assessment and authorisation processes. It is unclear whether this is from lack of development and/or the perceived bureaucracy involved. The Service reported that all LSO areas are exercising on a regular basis but are aware of the reluctance of some staff to develop their own.

105. We found evidence of an LSO area developing a two-year training and exercising programme. The document schedules 12 three pump exercises per year and all stations in the area are involved with development and participation. There was evidence that the planner was in use and also evidence of the area conducting a large six pump exercise at a local hospital. It is understood that this programme is being assessed by the other WSDA LSO areas with a view to adoption in some way. We found the planner to be a very positive addition to operational preparedness.

**Good Practice 5**

We were very pleased to observe the development of a comprehensive exercise and planning schedule within one LSO area. We believe that this is a good development and the Service should consider that all areas in the WSDA adopt the practice.

106. Some fire stations within the WSDA also respond to incidents over the border in England and vice versa and there are arrangements in place for the exchange of relevant information when working together with Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service. The working arrangements were said to work well.

**Operations Control - Johnstone**

107. There is an Operations Control (OC) based in JOC, one of three covering Scotland. JOC is responsible for handling emergency calls in the WSDA. Although JOC will handle the majority of the calls for the area it is also possible for the other two OCs to handle WSDA calls for resilience purposes. Although based within the WSDA the DACO has no direct control over the OC management, as it forms part of the Operations Function within the Service's management structure. However, there is an expectation that both the WSDA and JOC work together to ensure efficient and effective operational response.

108. As per Figure 2, call handling time is the cumulative time for JOC receiving a 999 call and then alerting the station or vehicle. Whilst response time is the accumulation of call handling by JOC plus mobilising and travel time of the vehicle or resource, call handling and response times are reported nationally. As of the reporting year 2022-23 the median time for the JOC was 1m 15s which is slightly lower than the Scottish and ESDA median, which are both 1m 19s. 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. However, the median response time to attend an incident within the WSDA is 8m 5s, which is slightly lower than the Scottish median at 8m 44s and significantly lower than the ESDA median at 9m 20s. There are many factors that can contribute to these figures, so it is very difficult to compare like for like and to a standard. On the basis of these figures alone we see no cause for concern with JOC compared to the rest of Scotland.
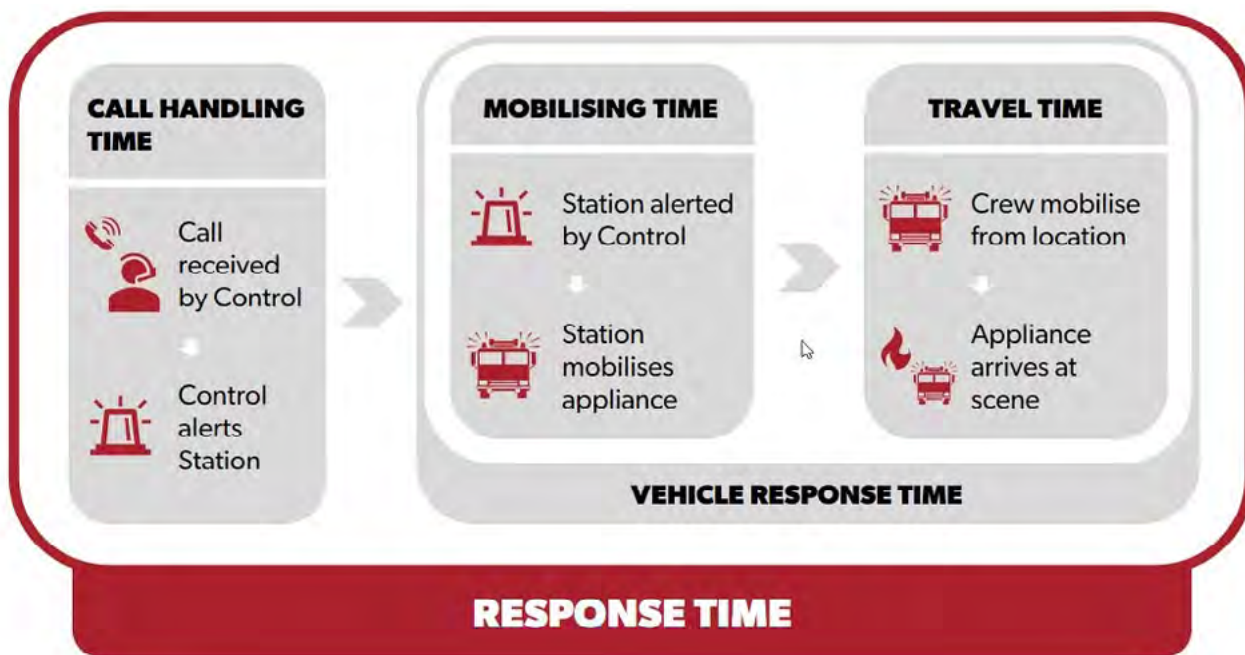
*Figure 2 – Response Time diagram*

109. The OC is one of the most important parts of the Service's operational response as it receives 999 calls as well as despatching and managing the appropriate resources to respond. OCs are currently managed in a functional structure with no dedicated middle manager having overall responsibility for JOC. JOC Watches are expected to liaise and communicate with the appropriate OC middle manager depending on their area of functional responsibility. We found many JOC staff frustrated by this structure as there was no single point or clear route by which they could progress issues. It is understood that there is currently a review of the Structure ongoing, which may initiate change and we look forward to monitoring the progress and outcome of this review.

| Recommendation 15 | We recommend that the Service completes its review of the Functional Management structure within JOC to ensure staff are being supported and operational preparedness is being delivered in the most efficient and effective way. |
| --- | --- |

110. To ensure the best results, the operational relationship between JOC and the WSDA should be strong and effective. JOC staff were able to provide evidence of occasional Flexi Duty Officer (FDO) engagement sessions and having positive relationships with 'go to' station personnel for help and advice. However, we could not find strong evidence of JOC staff routinely playing an active part in LSO management meetings or having a significant role in the performance of the Area. Although based within and serving the WSDA, there didn't appear to be very strong operational management or operational preparedness links to the SDA LSO teams.

| Recommendation 16 | We recommend that the WSDA should seek to strengthen and improve the operational and managerial links to JOC to improve operational preparedness and delivery. |
| --- | --- |

111. We also found some staff within JOC extremely frustrated and concerned about the introduction and go live processes of revised or new policy and procedure. The staff recounted numerous examples of difficulties with system configuration and preparation, poor planning, limited training, poor problem resolution, limited consultation and limited engagement. The introduction of the UFAS policy, the SSRP appliance removal, HRA

Strategy changes and the reinvigoration of the Strategic Cover General Information Note (GIN) were cited as prime examples. JOC staff believe that these issues have exacerbated staff turnover, absence rates for OC staff, workplace anxiety and resulted in poorer organisational performance.

| Recommendation 17 | We recommend that the Service should review its consultation and liaison process to ensure that the staff at JOC are provided with enough 'lead' time to prepare and train for policy and procedural changes. |
|---|---|

### Modernisation

112. The Service implemented a series of initiatives and changes during our fieldwork and we feel it is incumbent on us to detail our observations. As detailed in the introduction to this report, the Service; introduced a new UFAS policy in July 2023, which altered call handling and mobilisation processes; instigated a temporary Appliance Withdrawal Strategy in September 2023, which removed five pumping appliances (three from City of Glasgow, one from South Lanarkshire and one from Inverclyde) from the WSDA as part of the SSRP. In addition, it also implemented a HRA Strategy in September 2023 which removed seven height appliances from the WSDA with a net reduction of fifteen down to eight and implemented the standardisation of water rescue provision on the River Clyde in September 2023, which altered crewing for water rescue at Polmadie Fire Station from a dedicated to a dual staffing model.

113. In the main, the UFAS policy has been well received and staff are engaged with and understand the rationale and benefits. At the time of our fieldwork, the use of the additional capacity to the Service had not been fully realised. As such, it was difficult to gauge the impact on performance. Two notable issues are that JOC feel they are not realising a significant positive effect on their capacity, as they are dealing with the same call numbers as well as the increased call challenge aspect. However, the Service feel that whilst the call challenge might take slightly longer, if this results in a non attendance, the incident workload attached with the management of an incident should be reduced, which

may start to realise more capacity for JOC. In addition, some On-Call staff expressed concerns regarding the balance of income, which has dropped, versus the commitment of hours to the role. There were instances of staff seriously considering their tenure within the Service due to this issue. We are aware that the WSDA had offered additional engagement work to utilise the extra capacity, but the up take was limited as staff seemed reluctant to commit to non-operational work away from their primary employment. We note that UFAS performance is reported on a quarterly basis to the Service Delivery Board, then Service Delivery Committee and that any concerns identified should be managed at these fora.

114. The introduction of the other three strategies in September 2023 had significant impact on the WSDA, which was picked up latterly in our fieldwork. It is understood that there was a need for confidentiality regarding the proposed changes, that could be construed as being sensitive. Staff and partners were also somewhat sympathetic to the financial position of the Service and empathised with the need to change. Indeed, it is recognised that the Service also engaged with the HMFSI regarding this proposal who provided feedback on the data analysis at that time. However, many staff as well as internal and external partners reported that they felt the speed of the announcement was not appropriate, and that transparency, engagement, communication and consultation was very poor. They were critical of the analysis outputs and the prior communication from the management teams, LSO and Senior Leadership Team (SLT), which has led to a sense of mistrust of senior management. Consequent engagement has gone someway to repairing this loss of trust but, in some respects, it has only reinforced it. Staff at all levels reported emotions and criticism routinely linked with the challenges of change process.

**Recommendation 18**

We recommend that the Service should review its consultation, communication and liaison process to ensure the staff and partners are fully engaged in future substantial change processes.

**Good Practice 6**

We were very pleased to observe that the staff movement process within the WSDA was very successful and was applied with no recourse to grievance. We believe it would be worth debriefing this process in the WSDA to capture learning for any future modernisation issues that require staff movement.

115. It is still early in the change process and it appears the Service in the affected parts of the WSDA is still forming and adjusting to the new norm. Staff appreciate that changes are needed and even accept that further change is inevitable. However, there is a level of anxiety around this with some staff reporting that they feel less secure in their post. They also report that all the effort and capacity seemed to have gone into implementing the changes with little cognisance taken of reviewing existing targets, workload and process, whether they be nationally derived or local. Operationally, staff report that they feel the WSDA is less resilient, they often feel exposed at incidents, they feel less safe at work, and they feel that operations are less effective. Whether this is the reality is currently unknown and concerns should be picked up by the operational assurance process in time. It is however the perception of many staff at the moment. We accept that the Service has only recently delivered these interim changes to operational capacity and that this change process is ongoing, with a formal consultation process scheduled. That said, we feel that there is a need to fully understand the effect on appliance movements as well as consequential capacity and workload changes within stations.

116. A positive aspect reported regarding the changes, was the staff management and movement process. Staff reported that this was handled well by the LSO management teams in the WSDA, with peoples' personal circumstances and welfare heavily influencing transfers. The WSDA received no grievances throughout the process. Transfers weighted on personal need as opposed to operational need has inevitably resulted in increased DD of drivers and those personnel with specialist training.

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

117. 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 WSDA is judged to be Good.**

118. The main purpose of the SFRS, as defined by the Scottish Government in the Fire and Rescue Framework 2022[7], '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.' In our fieldwork across all six LSO areas, as well as interviewing local management teams, we observed Partnership meetings and we also interviewed LA Chief Executives, Scrutiny Chairs, Resilience Chairs, Senior Police Scotland Officers and selected partners from the Third Sector. In our opinion the Service is perceived universally as a very valued and effective partner.

119. There is a legislative requirement in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for Community Planning Partners (CPP) to jointly develop a local plan aimed at improving the quality of life for the people experiencing the greatest inequality with LA areas. There is strong evidence that the Service is complying with its statutory duty and LSO management teams are playing an active part in each LA CPP strategic group as well as contributing capacity and resources to sub meetings and initiatives. Some examples of partners that WSDA staff worked with include British Red Cross, Scottish Water, Mountain Rescue, Scottish Canals, Glasgow Humane Society, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), Nith Inshore Lifeboat, Mugdock Park and Loch Lomond Park Rangers etc. There are too many to mention all, but some of the initiatives included vulnerable people referral pathways, Fire Skills Training, community gardens, apiaries, human trafficking awareness, falls training and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training.

120. It is fully accepted that the Service is a statutory partner within community planning and as such it is required to be fully immersed in partnerships. It was noted that throughout the WSDA there is a large volume of work being done at all levels. Staff in the WSDA should be commended on the time and effort that is being invested in these relationships and the capacity and resources being used to deliver improvements to the community. That said, it is worth noting that from our observation and feedback given, we judged that the Service's current investment in partnership work may not be balanced with the investment of capacity required for other Service priorities. This is compounded by the fact that it is challenging to measure the return on investment from participation and attendance at many of the meetings and investment of resources to many of the initiatives. At a time when there is a focus on capacity within the Service, we would highlight the need to evaluate and evidence investment in partnership work against the consequential added value for the Service and the communities it serves.

| Recommendation 19 | We recommend that the Service should review its current partnership commitment within the WSDA to gauge its investment in capacity and resources versus the added value to outcomes realised by the Service and the communities it serves. |
| --- | --- |

121. Co-location is a key deliverable of the Scottish Emergency Service National Collaboration Strategy (SESNCS) of which the SFRS is a member. The Service is also an active member of the Joint Asset Sharing Group (JASG) with Police Scotland, the Scottish Ambulance Service, and Scottish Futures Trust. A key aspect of the JASG work is the Emergency Services' Co-Location Programme which promotes and supports the sharing of

space. Although based within the WSDA, the DACO has no direct control over Co-location. Examples of the partners sharing SFRS property in the WSDA include Police Scotland, Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS), Mountain Rescue, Apex Scotland and Blood Bikes. Some partners we spoke to were keen to explore further asset sharing opportunities where appropriate and the Service should welcome this.

122. The Service works in partnership with others to assess risk within the community, produces plans and makes preparation to respond to emergencies when required. The Service has responsibilities under the CCA 2004 to work in partnership with other organisations, through the West of Scotland Regional Resilience Partnership (WoSRRP) and compile a Community Risk Register (CRR). The CRR 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 WoSRRP and produce agreed and effective multi-agency plans and procedures. The CRR considers eight potential generic risks within the area, describes possible consequences, outlines what the WoSRRP members are doing, and also what the public can do themselves to mitigate risk.

123. WoSRRP activity is further sub-divided into six Local Resilience Partnership (LRP) areas; Argyll and Bute and West Dunbartonshire, Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Glasgow and East Dunbartonshire, Lanarkshire and West. The partnerships don't precisely match the LSO area boundaries, but the crossover is managed locally between the teams. We found strong evidence that the WSDA and LSO management teams are very active within these partnerships and are considered a valued member of that community. This activity is supported and enhanced well, by the involvement of a national cadre of Civil Contingency Officers (CCO) who are managed by the central Preparedness Function.

124. The SFRS maintains a register of community based assets, the 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 community assets listed on the register are available to the WSDA, on request, in order to provide assistance to the Service at an incident. We found that there was awareness of the CAR amongst firefighters and what resources were available. We found evidence that the CAR had been considered at incidents and that resources had been requested, although this was limited. OC staff had a working knowledge of the CAR and were able to confirm that it is infrequently used.

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

125. 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 equality, diversity and inclusiveness. **The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness within the WSDA is judged to be an Opportunity for Improvement.**

**Workforce Planning**

126. Service provided statistics demonstrated staffing levels for WT at 93% FTE of the TOM year ending the 31 March 2023, equating to about 100 firefighters. That said, latterly in our fieldwork, due to the operational changes brought about by SSRP, HRA Strategy and the rationalisation of Water Rescue in September 2023 we found that Wholetime Operational crews were generally established to the TOM.

127. For On-Call staffing levels, the SFRS normally has a TOM of between 10 to 20 firefighters (or 1000% to 2000%) depending on the size of the station, the number of appliance and any specialism etc. The percentage system allows management to employ more people on a reduced contract with the expectation that this will increase availability. Service provided statistic demonstrated staffing levels of between 67% and 83% for RDS and 66% and 70% for VDS, depending on the LSO area. An outlier to these figures was the low staffing levels (29%) at Leadhills Fire Station in South Lanarkshire, which was ultimately subject to closure following a public consultation process.

128. Turnover of staff within the WT workforce is normally less frequent and more predictable than with staff on other duty systems. The projected staff turnover in the 12 months to March 2024 was 7.5% for WT, 8.0% for On-Call RDS and 9.6% for On-Call VDS staff. Under normal circumstances, the Service is able to forecast staffing changes with a degree of accuracy and has more control over the need for recruitment. However, the figure for the WT may not be that accurate. The recent change made to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (FPS), resulted in a sudden unpredictable spike in retirements of 'in scope' firefighters, which has had an impact on workforce planning numbers. Consequentially, there has been the loss of many skilled and experienced firefighters as well as Incident Commanders and Managers. We were provided with examples of concern from station personnel, managers and internal and external partners regarding high turnover of staff and the subsequent loss in experience and continuity. It is understood that these issues may have been inevitable, given the high staff attrition, but there is an expectation that the impact would be mitigated somewhat with increased development, training and supervision for those remaining.

**Developing Leaders and Managers**

129. Succession planning is an integral part of workforce planning, ensuring that there is a developed workforce able to succeed others who are promoted and those that leave or retire. The SFRS has a centrally managed and established promotion, selection and development programme. We understand that the Service commenced a pilot project of a non-mandatory development pathway for officers and staff in December 2022. The project was to focus on enhancing the leadership and management skills of participants at a supervisory and middle management level.

130. We spoke to numerous members of staff fulfilling Supervisory, Middle and Strategic roles regarding personal development in anticipation of promotion or within their current posting. We explored their participation in and access to formal theoretical learning and development as well as practical exercising of the theory. We found very limited evidence of Service directed development, outwith the Training for Competence (TFoC) and refresher process. This position was reinforced by observation and feedback regarding; poor knowledge and application of policy, process and procedure; lack of confidence in the application of operational assurance process; lack of confidence in the risk assessment process, limited understanding of planning and performance process; limited knowledge of strategic values and mission and poor level of instructor knowledge. This was further

aggravated by the high turnover of staff and consequential issues detailed previously.

131. These issues were further exacerbated by the lack of confidence in the Appraisal process to produce any tangible results from development requested and the subsequent scepticism of worth in the process. In addition, we also noted that the use of mentoring was very limited as it was not formally promoted and many staff found high turnover in their line manager or that their line manager or colleague had been in post for a shorter period than them. That said, many staff in the WSDA were carrying out their role to a good standard and we found a predominance of self directed learning, which should be commended.

| Recommendation 20 | We recommend that the Service should conduct a review of its leadership and management development processes to provide a national standard and syllabus for delivery at all levels. |
| --- | --- |

132. Many of the issues observed in the previous paragraphs were supported by our Survey. We asked the question 'Do you have access to the development opportunities you would like?' 45% of respondents said they had access to development opportunities compared to 48% in the ESDA survey, so very similar. However, this indicated that 55% felt they didn't have access or were unsure. There was a suggestion in a number of responses that development courses and opportunities are not available for the majority. Staff reported that there are limited opportunities for development to prepare individuals for a promoted role despite being recognised as ready to progress within appraisal and those opportunities that are available are dependent on being successful at a promotional process. There appears to be, from a number of responses given, a lack of transparency on how development courses are allocated, often being offered at very short notice. Some believe that you have to be at the right place at the right time to be offered courses or promotional opportunities. Some respondents believe budgets are impacting on what is made available to them. Absence of further education was highlighted by some

respondents, including a lack of opportunities to be supported to a degree level. There is a common trend about a lack of development pathway and support available for those looking to progress their career. There is a perceived lack of development and training for those who are promoted to the next role. A number of FDOs commented on the lack of induction development (examples provided included Leadership training, attendance management, conflict resolution, discipline and health and safety).

133. We are aware and observed that in the WSDA there are supported Supervisory Manager development sessions for On-Call and WT in EWDAB and ENSA. The syllabuses of these sessions were comprehensive and well structured, which led to a high degree of engagement from the management teams and participants. It was pleasing to see a good level of communication and listening whilst also imparting both theoretical and practical knowledge. It was also very pleasing to observe a high level of feedback being provided to staff on previous questions raised. It is understood that the WSDA intends to increase and develop these sessions across the whole area and we would encourage that this should be supported.

| Good Practice 7 | We were very pleased to observe that areas in the WSDA had funded and delivered development session for Supervisory and Middle managers, which had been very well received. We believe it would be worth developing these sessions further across all areas, in support of a national syllabus and program being developed. |
| --- | --- |

**Recruitment and Retention**

134. Wholetime and On-Call recruitment is generally managed centrally by the national HR team. The Service provides prospective applicants with background information on what the process entails, such as details of the medical, fitness tests, psychometric test, practical test and selection centre.

135. As detailed earlier, there are continuing vacancies at On-Call stations and consequently there are continuous open recruitment campaigns running where necessary. We were made aware of routine recruitment campaign initiatives as well as locally developed and innovative marketing and recruitment to increase public awareness. Some highlights were the development of modular courses; the development of social media promotional material; the development of more flexible availability systems; the involvement of On-Call Support WCs; the development of Station curtilage banners and increased use of dual contracts. We found the local management teams and station crews to generally be very engaged with On-Call recruitment and would commend them for their efforts. That said, availability at some stations continues to be a challenge for the Service with recruitment and retention being two of the main factors.

136. For applicants interested in becoming On-Call firefighters there is now a Pre-Recruitment Engagement Programme (PREP) and a second iteration (PREP2). Once an application has been registered, personnel from the relevant local station as well as the On-Call support WC's will support the applicant in preparations to undertake the fitness and practical selection tests. We heard first hand from new employees of the On-Call who were participants in PREP and who felt the process had been of benefit. There are some continuing issues around the length of time taken to complete the initial recruitment process for On-Call. The Service reports that the average time for the On-Call recruitment process was three months. We were told 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.

137. We interviewed management teams as well as local station based personnel and major sources of frustration with recruitment are national recruitment standards, training course commitment as well as the contract of employment. The standard Task and Task Management (TTM) and BA course are both two week duration and represent a significant commitment for prospective candidates to be away from home and their primary employment. It is understood that the WSDA has supported and delivered innovative alterations to these courses, which has allowed a much more flexible and a modular approach.

138. Many staff found the ability to only offer a 100% (120 hr/p/wk) or 75% (90 hr/p/wk) contract to be far too inflexible and not representative of modern societal expectations and behaviours. Many staff thought that being able to offer 50% contracts to potential recruits would also be appealing and could potentially attract stay at home parents/workers who could cover that difficult day time. As detailed previously, staff turnover in the On-Call RDS and VDS can be significant. We were commonly told that the renumeration for the time committed was a potential factor for people leaving the Service, which was being exacerbated by the drop in income brought about by the introduction of the UFAS policy.

139. We were commonly told of the frustrations surrounding the national recruitment standards and in particular eyesight tests. There were instances where prospective candidates had progressed through the process, only to be told latterly that they couldn't be employed due to the standard of their eyesight. We understand that the recruitment process has been altered and the PREP system is designed to inform candidates earlier about this issue. That said, we are aware of a few acute issues where management teams have tried to recruit prospective staff in remote rural locations for eyesight to be the only inhibitor. The Service recognise this as a problem in remote rural areas, confirmed that they are currently aligned to the UK national recruitment standards and candidates are sifted on that basis.

140. It is understood that the Service is working within national terms and conditions, which restricts its ability to deviate from agreed employment guidance. However, there would seem to be lack of innovation, flexibility and pragmatism in this approach that is discounting prospective employees within isolated communities and discouraging existing employees from remaining in the Service. It is understood that the frustrations felt by On-Call staff surrounding terms and conditions is one shared by the SLT. The current nationally agreed UK FRS conditions of service and subsequent representative body position would make any deviations difficult to achieve. That said, it is understood that advanced negotiations are ongoing between the parties, which will improve this position in the near future and should be a positive development.

| Recommendation 21 | We recommend that the Service should review the national recruitment standards and T&Cs with a view to exploring, developing and implementing pragmatic and alternative solutions for local recruitment. |
| --- | --- |

141. We are aware that there is an On-Call improvement project, which has assessed many of these issues over an extended period of time and it is hoped that these are identified objectives to be addressed. Staff expressed their frustration at this project and the perceived lack of tangible outcomes to radically improve performance.

**Managing Performance**

142. In our discussions with personnel across the WSDA they generally reported a feeling of being supported by their immediate managers and LSO management teams. We were very aware that the LSO management teams were very proactive with middle managers frequently attending stations and the need to improve engagement at a strategic level. An issue raised at many stations and with partners was the frequent turnover of flexi-duty officers and that consistency was very hard to achieve with differing approaches and priorities on a regular basis. This was a source of frustration as personnel 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. That said, staff generally felt the visibility and engagement of management outwith the local team was very poor.

| Recommendation 22 | We recommend that the Service review its engagement strategy with a view to improving the visibility of Strategic Management at local level. |
| --- | --- |

143. Many of the issues observed in the previous paragraph were supported by our Survey. We asked the question 'Do you feel valued and supported by your management team, how would you rate this?' The mean average rating for this question was 6.70 in the WSDA, compared to 6.87 in the ESDA, so very similar. From the responses provided there is confirmation that individuals generally feel valued by their line management, particularly at station level. Beyond this, respondents advised they felt valued by LSO management, but some less so. However, there is a clear consensus that there is less support from more senior managers. Some positive ratings included comments around how individuals can contact and get hold of managers. However, some responses indicated there is a lack of visibility of their managers. There was also an acknowledgement amongst a number of responses that their managers have high workloads and a number of competing priorities which can impact on the support they receive. At either end of the scale there is some extremely positive and extremely negative narrative provided. For example, some reported feeling "extremely well supported". There are, however, some very negative responses and a small number of these (0.8%) related to bullying, compared to no comments reflecting this perception in the ESDA survey.

144. The SFRS has a procedure to manage performance through an annual appraisal process for all staff. In our experience we found that the genuine use of the system was sporadic with it being used more commonly within the Wholetime than the On-Call staff. There was a general feeling of apathy towards the system, and it was seen by some as a 'tick box' exercise. Many staff did not see the benefit of the appraisal system, that

good versus bad performance was rarely recognised and requests for development rarely materialised. There was also a very poor understanding of the system's part in good governance, which was detailed earlier in the report.

145. We got the impression that staff within the WSDA were very engaged with improving performance and delivering a good service to the community. However, many of the staff in the WSDA we spoke to were frustrated with the Service's structure and governance. Staff thought that they were not empowered enough and lacked autonomy to really improve the organisation. This was normally connected with the concern that the Service seemed to be too centralised now, the perception was that Functions generally worked in silos to their own agenda and that everything was a priority within the Service. Managers reported that they felt they had poor credibility in stations as they could not really affect change or make decisions that were not entirely aligned to functional process. Lastly, staff reported that they were disappointed that the Service had lost the agility developed during the response to COVID and that they had reverted to a reliance on previous process.

| Recommendation 23 | We recommend that the Service review its management and governance structure with a view to identifying improvements, which would give staff more local responsibility, autonomy and flexibility. |
|---|---|

## Equality and Diversity

146. 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 Learning Content Management System (LCMS) platform. 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' the concepts of equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights and why these are relevant to their job.

147. Data supplied by the SFRS details that 7.2% of WSDA 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 95% male 5% female, for On-Call RDS it is 94.4% male and 5.6% female, for On-Call VDS it is 84.5% male 15.5% female but for support staff it is 50% male and female 50%. Within the constituent local authority areas that make up the WSDA, as at the 2011 census, females make up an average of 51.9% of the local population.

148. An issue frequently raised or observed at stations was the lack of or limitation of dignified facilities. This was predominantly observed at On-Call stations as they tended to be smaller and more compact. It is understood that this issue forms part of the analysis of stations and their suitability as detailed previously in the SAMPP. Staff in the WSDA were in the main very pragmatic and accepting of their workplace limitations and it was difficult to assess any hidden impact on recruitment and retention. This approach by staff was very commendable but nonetheless it remains a very live management issue.

149. Data supplied by the SFRS details that 0.7% of WSDA staff identify themselves as ethnic minority. Again, within the constituent local authorities, those from an ethnic minority background make up an average of 2.85% 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 46.2% of WSDA staff haven't recorded their ethnic background or prefer not to say.

150. 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 under-represented groups. Nationally the Service aspires to have a workforce which is representative of the people and communities of Scotland. The Service has a published Positive Action Strategy 19-22, which we were informed was being refreshed during the previous ESDA inspection. Its aim is to promote the SFRS as an Employer of Choice

to Scotland's diverse communities, to attract, recruit and retain people from under-represented groups. We understand that the strategy is still due to be reviewed and republished but that this will happen as part of a planned review of recruitment and selection processes.

**Mental Health and Wellbeing**

151. The SFRS' Mental Health Strategy 20-23[8] gives a commitment to support its staff and to provide a positive and inclusive culture for staff to operate within as well as access appropriate information and professional assistance to maintain good mental health. Staff wellbeing is a priority of the SFRS and there is a range of support, for both physical and mental health available.

152. HMFSI published a Thematic Inspection report in December 2023 entitled 'Mental Health and Wellbeing Support in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service'[9]. This was an inspection specifically focused on Mental Health and Wellbeing (MHW) and contained 20 recommendations for improvement across the whole SFRS. As such, it is not the intention to revisit these themes.

153. Particular to the WSDA, we observed that posters promoting the Service's mental health campaign were very visible at the stations we visited. Most staff we spoke to were complimentary about the MHW support, particularly to that offered by command officers immediately following traumatic incidents. There seemed to be a very positive culture developing in the WSDA about being proactive in this regard, which should be commended. There also seemed to be a growing awareness and use of the Post Incident Support Process (PISP), which was also a very positive aspect.

154. Sickness absence within the WSDA has been reasonably static within most workforce duty groups as per Table 2 below. There is a noticeable rise in absence rates in the 2021-22 year, which is consistent with the ESDA figures and may be related to COVID. For the year 2022-23 the Wholetime absence rate of 6.63% for the WSDA is consistent with the ESDA absence rate of 6.64%. The absence rate for WSDA FDO's and On-Call staff is 4.74% and 5.27% respectfully. These are both slightly higher than those of the ESDA which are 2.99% and 4.14% respectively. The WSDA support staff absence rate is 5.36%, which is considerably lower that the ESDA, which was 8.09%.

155. It should be noted that there are considerable variations across the six WSDA LSO areas with absence rates both significantly above and below the averages. Absence is a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) within the WSDA and we are aware that it is monitored and reported on frequently to ensure proactive management.

**Wholetime**

| Year | Average Days Lost Per Person | Absence % |
|---|---|---|
| 2019-2020 | 6.13 | 5.55 |
| 2020-2021 | 6.89 | 4.99 |
| 2021-2022 | 11.08 | 8.77 |
| 2022-2023 | 8.64 | 6.63 |

**Flexi**

| Year | Average Days Lost Per Person | Absence % |
|---|---|---|
| 2019-2020 | 3.69 | 6.12 |
| 2020-2021 | 5.72 | 3.20 |
| 2021-2022 | 6.24 | 4.41 |
| 2022-2023 | 5.79 | 4.74 |

*Table 2 - WSDA Absence Rates*

**On-Call**

| Year | Average Days Lost Per Person | Absence % |
|------|------------------------------:|----------:|
| 2019-2020 | 15.53 | 5.47 |
| 2020-2021 | 11.70 | 3.62 |
| 2021-2022 | 19.77 | 6.16 |
| 2022-2023 | 17.28 | 5.27 |

**Support**

| Year | Average Days Lost Per Person | Absence % |
|------|------------------------------:|----------:|
| 2019-2020 | 9.54 | 5.07 |
| 2020-2021 | 4.87 | 2.40 |
| 2021-2022 | 12.46 | 8.00 |
| 2022-2023 | 9.80 | 5.36 |

*Table 2 (cont:) - WSDA Absence Rates*

156. There are national policies for the management of absence and helping to support staff in a Return to Work (RtW). We were provided strong evidence to suggest that absence within workplaces is managed as per the Policy and Procedures. However, we found evidence to suggest that the quality of this management could be improved by the development of supervisory managers, which is ongoing as detailed previously. In addition, staff reported that systems for monitoring trigger levels were not automatic and required manual intervention and analysis. This seemed to be an inhibitor to efficient and effective use of the processes for station personnel.

157. 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 WSDA for the twelve month period to March 2023, there were 1,252 referral cases. The most common reason for the referral was musculoskeletal injury (38%), with work related stress (28%) being the next most common.

**Health and Safety**

158. One of the Service's core values is safety and is underpinned by a Safety and Assurance Strategy. The Service aims to promote a positive safety culture. There is national performance reporting and trend analysis for key indicators covering, for example, accident and near miss statistics. As can be seen in Table 3, accident, injury and near miss numbers have declined over the last three reporting years, which was also a trend in the ESDA. The number reported for the WSDA is about 20% higher than a similar three year reporting period for the ESDA, which is 314. There is an expectation that this would be higher, given the differences in the metrics of the two areas and as such, we have no concern.

| | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | Total |
|---|--------:|--------:|--------:|------:|
| Accident/Injury | 191 | 102 | 95 | 388 |
| Acts of Violence | 25 | 29 | 31 | 85 |

*Table 3 - WSDA H&S occurrences*

159. The SFRS has a national system used for recording health and safety events and near misses. The general view of WSDA staff we spoke to was that the new system, 'Think Act Stay Safe' (TASS), was an improvement on the previous one, RIVO, but there were still times that the level of detail required was onerous and that the functionality was not always available.

160. We found strong evidence to suggest that Station Health and Safety Audits are in the main being conducted throughout the WSDA and that issues identified, and areas of improvement recorded. However, we did find, that although all conducted recently, there were many versions of the proforma in use with examples of v1.0 to v6.0 being used, which was not ideal.

161. Regrettably, acts of violence against personnel have been increasing over the last three reporting years as per Table 3 above. The number reported for the WSDA is about 26% higher than a similar three year reporting period for the ESDA, which is 63. There is an expectation that this would be higher, given the differences in the metrics of the two areas and as such, we have no concern in comparison. The Service reported that community engagement work continues with a targeted approach and that many of these events are generally concluded safely with no injuries to personnel. The Service has done a lot of work to ensure personnel, when faced with these types of incidents, know how to react to stay safe and then report these incidents. However, the increasing trend is of concern, 31 instances in a year is 31 too many and it is concerning that SFRS staff continue to be abused whilst at work.

**Training and Development**

162. 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 and for the WSDA is based at the SFRS National Training Centre (NTC) at Cambuslang. The National training team at Cambuslang is responsible for delivering certain courses, such as Recruit training, BA Refresher, Compartment Fire Behaviour, Tactical Ventilation, Incident Command and Driver Training. Local training staff support both technical and practical input in a range of core and specialist skills, such as BA, Casualty Care, HazMat, Knots and Lines, RTC extrication, Water awareness, SWaH, Incident Command, Driving and Trainee Phases. 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. We were provided evidence that these plans are in place to ensure ongoing training and development for Wholetime and On-Call staff.

163. It is an SFRS expectation that, in the WSDA, training in the main is driven by on station Supervisory managers supported by Local training staff who are scheduled to attend regularly. This training is also supported at On-Call stations with the On-Call Support WC's. Staff routinely praised local training staff and standards, they were very supportive and engaged with training delivered locally. In contrast, many staff were very critical of training delivered at the NTC. This feedback tended to be focused on frustration and disappointment regarding access to courses, reduced access to the facility, perceived underuse of the facility and standard of training when there. That said, the Service reported that those staff who have attended the NTC for training and courses returned very high satisfaction ratings and that they are currently developing a Framework to ensure stations have access to all training facilities they require to maintain the skills.

164. There were also some concerns raised about the continuing use of Training Officers to assist Fleet with the logistics of appliance and equipment movement. Although commendable, staff and management reported that this had an impact on their capacity to fulfil their primary role. Staff also reported they felt there was an over reliance on digital learning with not enough delivery of practical training. However, the Service believes that a more holistic 'blended learning' approach to knowledge and skills maintenance is key to ensuring firefighter safety within a modern fire and rescue service. This blended approach to learning is being delivered through their TFoC and practical consolidation delivered locally. It is understood that the Service is developing the blended learning experience, but staff generally felt that the balance wasn't correct yet.

165. For new entrants, Wholetime personnel attend a three month training 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, Red, Amber and Green. Due to recent increased intakes 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 finding it difficult to be signed off as being competent firefighters, due to a lack of SVQ Assessors and Verifiers nationally to approve these plans. HMI Education recently conducted a audit with regards to the Modern Apprenticeship and SVQ Process, with a subsequent number of recommendations that the People Directorate are working through.

166. There was also consistent feedback from supervisory managers that trainees arriving on station didn't exhibit a level of competence in skills that they considered the most important. Examples given, were lack of consistency from instructors, too much emphasis on community safety and not enough emphasis on basic skills such as casualty care, RTC and BA. The Service has reported that the Trainee Foundation course was historically reviewed with a reduction in CS input in favour of core operational training. In addition, the course is constantly debriefed, with feedback taken forward as learning and actioned to ensure continuous improvement. The course through this process has recently been increased by one week based on feedback from Trainees to enhance training for BA and Casualty Care. That said, there would seem to be a disconnect between the expectation of trainee development when joining station and what the Service believes it is delivering.

167. Initial training for an On-Call firefighter is to attend a two-week Task and TTM course, followed by a further two weeks at a later date. The initial training for On-Call staff can be a barrier as detailed earlier in the report. 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 modularised 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.

168. The SFRS made a substantial change to its ongoing or TFoC, training programme for firefighters in April 2022. These included the core skills to be covered over a 12 month period and standard and advanced modules to be covered over 36 months. Continuous training is delivered using an e-learning system known as the LCMS, which uses videos as well as online questions and answers to support and assess staff competencies. We have previously commented in several reports that staff reported the training packages were not entirely conducive to learning. Consequently, changes were 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.

169. 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 TFoC modules mentioned earlier. As detailed, there is also nationally delivered refresher training to ensure competence is maintained. Operational readiness within the SFRS is measured across competence in TFoC, Core Skills and Specialist Skills. Nationally the Service sets a compliance performance target of 95% for the workforce. Performance in the WSDA is set out in Tables 4 to 6.

| Core Skill - TFoC 22/23 | % Competence (WT) | % Competence (RDS) | % Competence (Vol) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Breathing Apparatus | 93 | 84 | 20 |
| Casualty Care | 91 | 83 | 16 |
| Incident Command | 92 | 80 | 15 |
| Knots and Lines | 93 | 86 | 21 |
| RTC and Extrication | 90 | 81 | 25 |
| Hazardous Material | 89 | 76 | 17 |
| SWaH | 91 | 70 | 7 |
| Water Awareness | 92 | 84 | 14 |
| Driving | 94 | 91 | 8 |

Table 4 - Core Skill TFoC competence

| Core Skill - National Refresher 22/23 | % Competence (WT) | % Competence (RDS) | % Competence (Vol) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Breathing Apparatus Refresher | 82 | 75 | 29 |
| Compartment Fire Behaviour Refresher | 61 | 54 | 18 |
| Tactical Ventilation Refresher | 4 | 24 | 3 |
| Incident Command Level 1 Refresher | 91 | 93 | 55 |
| Emergency Response Driving Refresher | 70 | 96 | 72 |

Table 5 - National Core Skill Refresher programme competence

| Specialist Skills - National Refresher 22/23 | % Competence (WT) | % Competence (RDS) | % Competence (Vol) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Heavy Rescue | 72 | N/A | N/A |
| Urban Search and Rescue | 67 | N/A | N/A |
| Water Rescue | 117* | 250 | N/A |
| Rope Rescue | 88 | N/A | N/A |
| Mass Decontamination | 118* | N/A | N/A |

Table 6 - National Specialist Skill Refresher programme competence
*Figures in excess of 100% indicate that more persons are trained than required for resilience, the Service are
aware of this and it is part of an ongoing development of team typing and increased resilience.

170. We can observe from Table 4 that WT staff in the WSDA are generally maintaining core skills at or around the 90% mark, albeit they are generally below the 95% national standard. On-Call RDS Staff are generally maintaining core skills between 80% and 90%. However, there are significant dips in this number for HazMat and SWaH and all core skills are significantly below the 95% national standard apart from Driving. The VDS On-Call fall well below the maintenance of skill percentages across all core skills with the highest attained being 25%, which is concerning.

**Recommendation 24**

We recommend that the WSDA reviews its delivery of Core Skill TFoC training with improvement in completion at VDS stations deemed a priority.

171. We can observe from Table 5 that WT and RDS On-Call Staff in the WSDA are generally having core skills refreshed at a National Training Centre to a varying standard. The percentage of staff who have had refresher training in Compartment Fire and Tactical Ventilation are well below the national standard. This is consistent with feedback from staff who expressed disappointment and frustration regarding the lack of 'hot wear' BA training, which is concerning. The tactical ventilation figure for WT of 4% is extremely low and was subject to clarification from the Service. It is understood that this issue forms part of a BA recovery plan with a different delivery strategy for BA, compartment fire and tactical ventilation refreshers. The VDS On-Call fall well below the refresher of core skill percentages across all core skills with the highest attained being 72%, which is concerning.

**Recommendation 25**

We recommend that the Service review its delivery of core skill refresher training with improvement in WSDA BA Compartment Fire and Tactical Ventilation courses and all skills at VDS stations deemed a priority.

172. We can observe from Table 6 that that WT and RDS On-Call Staff in the WSDA are generally having specialist skills refreshed at a National Training Centre to a varying standard with some notable successes in Water Rescue and Mass Decontamination. However, there are significant dips in this number for Heavy Rescue and USAR refresher training. We have been advised of continuing national difficulties relating to training in USAR, borne out in the statistics above and our previous report of the ESDA.

**Recommendation 26**

We recommend that the Service review its delivery of specialist skill refresher training with improvement in WSDA Heavy Rescue and USAR required.

173. 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. Our experience within the WSDA demonstrated that there was still a shortage of drivers and that many drivers were spending extended periods on that one skill. As detailed previously, some drivers noted that they had rarely worked in a non-driving role for months and years on end.

174. Notwithstanding the improvement in the LCMS packages, issues, also raised by us in earlier inspections, are poor internet connection, and restricted access to and perceived poor quality of computers, particularly in On-Call fire stations. These are of particular relevance given the blended approach and emphasis on digital learning. Staff also provided feedback that it was particularly difficult accessing training equipment and that the ability to be placed on Training/Strategic reserve had almost disappeared.

175. We were made aware that there are three stations in the WSDA, which were traditionally designated Ship Firefighting stations. We believe these stations were historically Ardrossan, Greenock and Govan and were identified due to their proximity to local risks such as docks, harbours and shipyards. Concern was raised by staff regarding the fact that there was no new course in the

skill, they had not been trained on this skill in a number of years and competence had probably lapsed. However, there was still an expectation the Service would attend incidents on ships if they were alongside. This issue was confirmed by management and reinforced by a Local Training Plan indicating that the Service did not provide a Tactical Ship Firefighting (TSFF) course. This is of particular concern as it seems anomalous with routine Fire Service skill acquisition and maintenance protocols. It was also unclear whether the Service continued to develop TSFF Tactical Advisors at FDO level.

| Recommendation 27 | We recommend that the Service review the provision of TSFF training and explore the delivery of WSDA acquisition and refresher courses in the future. |
|---|---|

176. Firefighters in development commented on being disadvantage by the change in SVQ/Apprenticeship guidance, instigated by the awarding body, part way through their 3-year development period, resulting in having to "start again" as well as adding undue stress to them and their colleagues. It was reported that this drop in completion rates continued to affect the ability to reach competence and the consequential negative financial impact. As detailed previously the People Directorate are working through recommendations made by the Education Inspector. There was reference to the lack of continued practical training for their role beyond local organised training. Opinions were expressed around the lack of structured CPD for Tactical Advisor (TacAd) roles. The Service acknowledged these concerns and stated that a number of ongoing work streams such as a BA Instructor revalidation process, Methods of Instruction training and the development of a Skills Maintenance Framework would help alleviate these issues.

177. Many of the issues observed in the previous paragraphs were supported by our Survey. We asked the question 'Do you feel confident that you are adequately trained for your role, how would you rate this?' The mean average rating for this question was 7.11 in the WSDA, compared to 7.12 in the ESDA, so very similar. A lot of the positively rated responses

were supported by narrative claiming they felt they were "adequately trained". A high volume of the narrative in support of both negative and positive ratings referred to the majority of training being self-led. Of these, the more positive scorings refer to on the job experience largely supplementing self-led training. However, there are a high number of respondents who refer to there being too much reliance on TFOC and theory self-led training. A number expressed their concerns around the lack of BA Training (practical hot fire/carbonaceous training) and RTC training. Some comments from the survey suggested that some trainees generally do not feel confident starting at station following their initial training. Comments relate to too much focus on less relevant elements and they feel they have a lack of exposure to carbonaceous BA and Trauma training.

178. The national contract issues and supply of scrap cars for RTC training was a continual issue highlighted by personnel. In our fieldwork many stations reported extended periods of years since having a car to practice extrication, although this was not confirmed.

179. The Training Safety and Assurance Function have been developing a new Training Function Vision and Strategy 23-28[10]. Their vision is to provide 'clarity and resources to ensure we work safely, collaboratively and progressively to deliver excellence in operational training'. The intention is to provide a Skills Maintenance Framework, Training Delivery Framework and Training Assets Framework to reset and improve the performance of training throughout the SFRS. In order to achieve this vision, there was a need to alter the current structure of training into a single Training Function. Consequently, there has been a decision to merge all WSDA local training staff and the National Instructor Pool (NIP) into the single SFRS Training Function, which will hopefully ensure training is centrally co-ordinated and locally delivered. The movement of staff was partially done in October 2023 with the remainder transferred in April 2024. It is envisaged that these changes should provide improvement in many of the areas detailed in the previous paragraphs.

180. There is a degree of concern in the WSDA regarding the loss of local control of training staff, given their positive influence. Staff are sceptical the changes will realise local performance improvement, and many see this as a continued move to centralisation and subsequent loss of local control. In addition, there was also concern regarding the lack of detail regarding remaining workload and responsibility, which hadn't been clarified. That said, the Strategy is a clear and innovative attempt from the Training Function to start to address many of the historic training issues and they should be commended for its development. It should also be noted that the introduction of the Strategy and Vision has been ongoing throughout the inspection and that many of the concerns raised regarding changes may be a timing issue.

| Recommendation 28 | We recommend that the Service implement and resource the new Training Vision and Strategy in its entirety, in order that both historic and contemporary areas of improvement be upgraded and that evaluation of this be completed. |
|---|---|

**Assurance**

181. The SFRS has an Operational Assurance (OA) Policy that details it is a safety management system, underpinned by the key 'Safe Person Principles', which aims to support the delivery of a safe, effective and efficient operational response using planned and systematic processes to minimise organisational risk. The application of robust OA processes, such as pre-incident audits, during incident monitoring and post-incident reviews, supports the concept and ethos of good operational preparedness as well as a learning organisation focused on continuous improvement. Staff were generally aware of the Operational Assurance Recording and Reporting System (OARRS), with many reporting that they had used the system for Station Audits, Incident reviews or Incident/ Event debriefs.

182. We found strong evidence to suggest that pre incident Station Audits are in the main being conducted throughout the WSDA and that areas of improvement and good practice are being recorded. On some occasions we found that staff were unaware of their Station Audit outcome and that the information wasn't being routinely shared or debriefed. This was a bit disappointing, given the fact that they had been completed and the opportunity to improve was being missed. We found no evidence of during incident monitoring but felt that this was mainly due to the national nature of the Incident Command System (ICS) as opposed to it being a local management issue.

183. With regard to post incident reviews, we found a very mixed picture of performance. Staff were very conversant with the Hot Debrief process and gave a lot of good evidence surrounding the positive use and learning from them being conducted at Level 1 incidents. The predominance at Level 1 incidents seemed to be Hot Debrief with little structured debriefing thereafter. There were, however, many instances of the hot debrief process being developed further to include discussion around MHW. Staff were also very comfortable with then reviewing an incident on return to the fire station if the nature of the incident required it. We found some evidence of involvement with Level 4 and above, structured incident debriefs as well as for thematic events such as severe weather. These were generally very memorable to staff and included examples such as the Glasgow School of Art, Albert Drive, Lancefield Quay and various recent storms. Due to the size and therefore infrequency of these types of incident/events there was limited instances recounted of feedback and learning outcomes.

184. For Level 2 and Level 3 structured debrief the OA policy allows commanders to opt for a face to face process or to issue an electronic OA13 information gathering process on the OARRS. It is understood that both systems have their merits and there is an expectation that both should be used in a blended approach to ensure good Organisational Learning (OL). We found limited evidence of commanders conducting any face to face debriefs and almost universally, the predominance was to use the OA13 electronic system. It is not clear why this is the case, but some reasons given by staff were, the convenience of the

electronic system, the capacity needed to conduct a face to face process and a lack of development and resulting confidence in debrief skills. Staff reported that involvement with an OA13 process rarely produced tangible learning.

185. In general, we found a degree of apathy and disappointment towards the OA system with many staff reporting that they almost never got any feedback from being part of a process and when learning did get communicated it had taken far too long to be disseminated. We are aware, from observing the TSAB, that OA forms an important part of OL with the topic and outcome scheduled into discussion and reporting. In addition, staff did report receiving learning in the form of altered SOPs and 'Front Line' updates. However, it is concerning that the face to face debrief process and subsequent positive learning aspects, seem to be diminishing within the WSDA.

| **Recommendation 29** | We recommend that the Service review the implementation of OA policy and practice within the WSDA in order that improvement and development of local and organisation learning be realised. |

# Recommendations and Good Practice

**Recommendation 1:** We recommend that the Service provides clarity on the expected business planning processes to be adopted in the coming years, and how they should align to the Good Governance Framework. All agreed processes should then be reinvigorated and clearly communicated across all SDAs.

**Recommendation 2:** We recommend that the Service reviews the impact of the Chief Officer's fund being removed within the WSDA and that guidance is provided to all staff as to how this resourcing should be replaced.

**Recommendation 3:** We recommend that the Service reassess the impact of High Rise OAVs on capacity and explore the concept of a risk based inspection approach that embraces safety and assurance whilst not being overly burdensome.

**Recommendation 4:** We recommend that the WSDA review the hazards within their area and confirm that specific operational procedures have been developed, if it is deemed that they are not covered entirely by generic standard operational procedures.

**Recommendation 5:** We recommend that the Service review its Fire Appliance Driver and Specialist capacity in the WSDA to understand the areas of most pressure and apply mitigation, which allows firefighters to practice variety in the role on a more regular basis.

**Recommendation 6:** We recommend that the Service reviews the WSDA Fire Station condition surveys to understand the areas of most pressure regarding dignified facilities and contaminants to explore any possible interim mitigation measures.

**Recommendation 7:** We recommend that the Service resolves the RAAC roofing problems at the affected stations as a matter of urgency.

**Recommendation 8:** We recommend that the Service review the existing practices and processes within the WSDA for property maintenance with the Central Property partner in order that increased local administration and responsibility of property be explored.

**Recommendation 9:** We recommend that the Service review the existing practices and processes within the WSDA for vehicle management with the Central Fleet partner in order that increased local administration and responsibility of vehicles be explored.

**Recommendation 10:** We recommend that the Service reviews the existing practices and processes for equipment provision and maintenance within the WSDA with the Central Equipment partner in order that increased local administration and responsibility of equipment can be realised.

**Recommendation 11:** We recommend that the Service standardise the recording of equipment testing with a national electronic system as soon as possible.

**Recommendation 12:** We recommend that the Service reviews the existing BA provision within Volunteers Stations to satisfy itself that training, testing and maintenance is being conducted to an acceptable standard and that the capability can be deployed safely within existing policy and operational guidance.

**Recommendation 13:** We recommend that the WSDA reviews the existing SWaH provision within D&G and develop an improvement plan for consistent maintenance of skills and service delivery.

**Recommendation 14:** We recommend that the Service investigate the application of the national laundry contract processes and look to explore improvements within the WSDA.

**Recommendation 15:** We recommend that the Service completes its review of the Functional Management structure within JOC to ensure staff are being supported and operational preparedness is being delivered in the most efficient and effective way.

**Recommendation 16:** We recommend that the WSDA should seek to strengthen and improve the operational and managerial links to JOC to improve operational preparedness and delivery.

**Recommendation 17:** We recommend that the Service should review its consultation and liaison process to ensure that the staff at JOC are provided with enough 'lead' time to prepare and train for policy and procedural changes.

**Recommendation 18:** We recommend that the Service should review its consultation, communication and liaison process to ensure the staff and partners are fully engaged in future substantial change processes.

**Recommendation 19:** We recommend that the Service should review its current partnership commitment within the WSDA to gauge its investment in capacity and resources versus the added value to outcomes provided for the Service and the communities it serves.

**Recommendation 20:** We recommend that the Service should conduct a review of its leadership and management development processes to provide a national standard and syllabus for delivery at all levels.

**Recommendation 21:** We recommend that the Service should review the national recruitment standards and T&Cs with a view to exploring, developing and implementing pragmatic and alternative solutions for local recruitment.

**Recommendation 22:** We recommend that the Service review its engagement strategy with a view to improving the visibility of Strategic Management at local level.

**Recommendation 23:** We recommend that the Service review its management and governance structure with a view to identifying improvements, which would give staff more local responsibility, autonomy and flexibility.

**Recommendation 24:** We recommend that the WSDA reviews its delivery of Core Skill TFoC training with improvement in completion at VDS stations deemed a priority.

**Recommendation 25** We recommend that the Service review its delivery of core skill refresher training with improvement in WSDA BA Compartment Fire and Tactical Ventilation courses and all skills at VDS stations deemed a priority.

**Recommendation 26** We recommend that the Service review its delivery of specialist skill refresher training with improvement in WSDA Heavy Rescue and USAR required.

**Recommendation 27** We recommend that the Service review the provision of TSFF training and explore the delivery of WSDA acquisition and refresher courses in the future.

**Recommendation 28** We recommend that the Service implement and resource the new Training Vision and Strategy in its entirety, in order that both historic and contemporary areas of improvement be upgraded and that evaluation of this be completed.

**Recommendation 29** We recommend that the Service review the implementation of OA policy and practice within the WSDA in order that improvement and development of local and organisation learning be realised.

**Good Practice 1:** We were very pleased to observe innovative community safety initiatives. Staff in the WSDA should ensure that safety initiatives are recognised and that ideas are shared within the rest of the SDA and across the Service.

**Good Practice 2:** We were very pleased to observe proactive management and development of BCMPs for each of the workplaces within the WSDA.

**Good Practice 3:** We were very pleased to observe proactive management of On-Call Availability and examples of innovative local staffing solutions, such as the increased use of dual staffing, which made the system more user friendly.

**Good Practice 4:** We were pleased to observe the development of the Asset Management Policy and SAMPs as they provide clearer direction with regards to future asset investment, development and review requirements.

**Good Practice 5:** We were very pleased to observe the development of a comprehensive exercise and planning schedule within one LSO area. We believe that this is a good development and the Service should consider that all areas in the WSDA adopt the practice.

**Good Practice 6:** We were very pleased to observe that the staff movement process within the WSDA was very successful and was applied with no recourse to grievance. We believe it would be worth debriefing this process in the WSDA to capture learning for any future modernisation issues that require staff movement.

**Good Practice 7:** We were very pleased to observe that areas in the WSDA had funded and delivered development session for Supervisory and Middle managers, which had been very well received. We believe it would be worth developing these sessions further across all areas, in support of a national syllabus and program being developed.

# **Appendix A:** 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.

**Crosscutting Issues - LSO Area Focus**

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| **Prevention and Protection** <br> P&P | The LFRPs in the WSDA have assessed a good range of risks and threats and were of a good quality. 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. | The postponement of the LFRPs is causing a degree of frustration at the local level and confusion as to how planning for routine workload should be conducted. There is a level of confusion amongst staff regarding the processes of planning as opposed to reporting, with the latter being relied upon heavily. There was limited evidence of Station Plans and their ongoing development and review. There was evidence of a seven week planner but this had fallen into disuse due to it not being refreshed in recent time. Very little evidence that suggested targets and objectives borne from the LFRPs and organisational strategy formed part of the appraisal process as there was little appreciation of the link. |
| | Each LSO area has a LPDP, which outlines the work of the LALO, CAT and frontline firefighters that aligns with Service priorities and their local requirements. | CSET risk scoring is not seen to accurately reflect a person's actual risk, leading to deserving cases not being assessed accurately. Staff report that the 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. PDIRs should be carried out dynamically and so would also benefit from a tablet-based resource. |
| | Staff in the WSDA were heavily involved with established methods such as HFSV, PDIR visits, Vulnerable People referral pathways, seasonal TAP and that these were used extensively. | CAT staff were disappointed that their access to TFoC, opportunities for CPD and formal development to a recognised qualification were extremely limited or non-existent. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| **P&P** | Staff were generally involved with traditional engagement activity such as Bonfire Night Initiatives, Schools, Fetes, Nurseries, Gala Days etc. It was clear that much of this historic activity had been curtailed during the COVID period, that recovery was still underway, and to some extent hadn't been reinvigorated locally. | There was uncertainty regarding the removal of the Chief Officer's Fund and the LSO's ability to deliver discretionary spend on prevention resources such as safe letter boxes and fire retardant bedding thereafter. This was a source of concern to frontline crews who felt they couldn't intervene effectively when a risk to a vulnerable person had been identified. |
| | Each LSO area has a LEDP, which outlines the work of the Local Managers, FSEOs and AOs that aligns with these Service priorities and their local requirements. | No evidence of either informal or formal feedback from the FIT to prevention teams in the WSDA that had been used to develop activity. |
| | Prevention and Protection teams to be well staffed with varying degrees of competence, knowledge and experience. | Prevention staff do not feel particularly supported by the Prevention and Protection Directorate. Community engagement education packages are said to be not readily available, causing a sense of real frustration. There is frustration that there would seem to be no 'go to' person in the P&P function. |
| | OI information held was being provided and reviewed to ensure its accuracy. Procedures for collecting and reviewing information on OI were a mixture of proactive and reactive processes which ranged from informal drive by to formal liaison and communication with Council Planning officers. | General feeling that a lot of the capacity has been consumed by unplanned workload such as STL licensing, ACCM concerns and/or non mandatory and reactive workload such as complaints and enquiries. |
| | The Service is currently developing and rolling out a new OI system, with new hardware, that will enhance and replace the current systems. We see this as an improvement but are unsure as to the timescales for this and as such, current processes and hardware remain extant. | In respect of the STL issue, many staff were particularly frustrated by the lack of guidance and direction from the National Prevention and Protection Function. |
| | Evidence that BCMPs have been developed for each workplace within the WSDA and that these have been reviewed within a reasonable timeframe. The standard of these plans was very consistent and thorough. | Recruitment and retention of staff is an ongoing challenge. There is a lack of experience with enforcement staff within some of the current management structure. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| P&P | Some good examples of promoting biodiversity and conservation with community gardens, including apiaries, at community fire stations. | The programme of nationally derived fire safety audits was said to struggle to go beyond identified framework premises. |
| | | Continuing problems with the enforcement PPED, means that personnel are maintaining their own records to cover system inadequacies. It is reported as losing data and doesn't maintain a full history of the premises. There is a strong feeling that this presents a risk. |
| | | No evidence of a risk based approach to High Rise Building inspections in place and consequently, these visits continue to be a significant burden for certain operational crews and for some enforcement staff at a time of reduced resources. |
| | | Not convinced that the OI system employed throughout the WSDA was infallible and that all relevant OI had been collected and reviewed. |
| | | There is a lack of faith in the demountable OI tablet capabilities resulting in its infrequent use. The device was underused by firefighters mainly due to the problems associated in using it, which we also highlighted in our 2019 report. Continued ongoing issues with the automatic up-dating of the tablet device and the ability to create new OI records. This would seem to be a national problem and one that the Service has been trying to resolve. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|-------|-------|------|
| | | The Service confirmed that SSOP's are no longer being developed and informed us that the Operations Function are currently developing a new document strategy, which will include operating procedures supported by manuals. We are also aware that the Service has developed enhanced incident response plans and OI for some specific hazards. However, we are still unsure whether all hazards within the WSDA that may require specific operating procedures outwith generic guidance have them in place. |
| **Response**  | Due to the operational changes brought about by SSRP, HRA Strategy and the rationalisation of Water Rescue in September 2023, we found that Wholetime Operational crews were generally established to or around the TOM. Although there were still instances of appliance withdrawal and appliances being staffed to four, we found that the picture had in the main improved and there was reduced negative feedback regarding this particular issue. | Reduced crewing level frustrated operational firefighters as it could lead to increased detached duties, PPE transport issues, consistent and regular appliance withdrawal, overtime fatigue, difficulty in getting time off in lieu etc. DD had increased following the September changes and that this was mainly caused by the displacement of staff and consequently local skills shortages in fire appliance driving and specialism. Frustration and concerns raised by staff were the inability to train and complete SVQ development with their own Watch, inability to get time off as well as general welfare issues surrounding the constant additional travel and impact on home life. |
| | Awareness and understanding of SOPs as well as other operational guidance, where they could be accessed either within the workplace or on the incident ground. Most staff seemed very comfortable with the format and content as an aid to strong incident command, whilst others found them a bit cumbersome. | There were many instances of Watches only having one or two appliance drivers and the same person constantly driving a fire appliance. We were routinely provided evidence of individual drivers spending long periods of time, months or years, without regularly running in the position as a BA Operator. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
|  | Service published the SAMPP, which sets out how the SFRS aim to achieve a modern and fit for purpose property estate that supports the effective delivery of services across the whole organisation. Fire stations were found to be generally well kept, clean and tidy. Fire stations in the WSDA have had refurbishment work undertaken to provide enhanced fire safety, windows replaced, doors replaced, more suitable dignified facilities for staff, solar panels installed and improved heating systems etc. | Staff were particularly frustrated by the consultation and implementation change process of SOPs and other operational guidance documents. Change could often happen whilst they were on leave and that refamiliarising themselves quickly could be difficult, considering the changes were often not highlighted and that there was a need sometimes to reread the whole procedure. |
| | Service published the SAMPF, which sets out how the SFRS aims to design and implement an efficient, reliable, resilient and fit for purpose fleet solution for services across the whole organisation. Appliances allocated to the area are of a varying age and are generally being kept in good condition. | Fire stations throughout WSDA identified as not having minimum toilet facilities, dedicated drying facilities, rest or canteen facilities, dedicated locker rooms, sufficient showering facilities, dedicated water supply, dignified facilities and appropriate contaminant control measures. Staff reported that the use of the national property maintenance contract and perceived centralisation of decisions and budget control made the process inefficient and ineffective. In most case where upgrade work had been carried out staff were very appreciative of the effort but frustrated by the standard of work completed. |
| | Service published the SAMPE, which sets out how the SFRS aims to set out how the Service will manage, maintain and develop equipment assets. | Concern to staff was the poor condition of many spare appliances and the lack of equipment provided on them. Staff reported that the use of a predominantly centralised fleet maintenance system and perceived centralisation of decisions and budget control made the process more inefficient and ineffective. Examples of issues included the use of local staff capacity to move appliances to a central point, increased cost of fuel for appliance movements, increase road risk as well as extended periods without vehicles due to logistics and travel. Consistently given that staff were concerned regarding the age and condition of National Resilience assets and equipment such as the DIM vehicle and MD units. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
|  | Aware that there are 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 understand that a contract for new radios has been awarded. We see this as an extremely positive improvement, but the Service is unsure as to the timescales for project completion and as such, concerns regarding current processes and hardware remain extant. | Staff reported that the use of a predominantly centralised equipment maintenance system and perceived centralisation of decisions and budget control made the process more inefficient and ineffective. Examples of issues included the limited stock of spare equipment, use of local staff capacity to move equipment to a central point, increased cost of fuel for vehicle movements, increase road risk as well as extended periods without equipment due to logistics and extended travel. |
| | Generally satisfied with some of the level and quality of operational equipment supplied. Appliance ladders and PRE were of particular note and received a lot of positive feedback. | Service should standardise the recording of equipment testing with a national electronic system as soon as possible. |
| | Very good feedback regarding the standard of Structural PPE. In the main, we found the kit to be well maintained and clean, although there were instances of soiled gear and poor record keeping. | 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 pending the go live of new digital radios. |
| | We are aware that at a recent TSAB the Service indicated that there may be a capital investment with a view to increasing the amount of spare PPE stock, which should ease these operational issues. | Source of frustration to staff that given the rise in forced entry incidents, bespoke equipment to assist this type of incident such as a power drill, reciprocating saw and door opener hadn't been provided, after repeated requests. |
| | Strong evidence that the Service is taking part in joint exercising and on many occasions, the Service within the WSDA was leading the partnership approach on behalf of the Local Authority. The Service within the WSDA has a very positive reputation in this respect and is a trusted and active partner. Some evidence of station personnel developing and conducting exercises offsite. Where these exercises had been delivered, they were well received by station personnel who seemed enthused by the innovative and diverse training. | Nearly all fire stations reported that the national laundry contract and processes were very frustrating and potentially inhibited a positive contaminants culture. There were numerous examples of PPE taking lengthy periods to be returned from cleaning, PPE not being picked up and PPE simply disappearing with no notification as to why. This would seem to have led to a culture where firefighters are reluctant to send PPE away for cleaning more regularly than the minimum. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
|  | JOC staff were able to provide evidence of occasional FDO engagement sessions and having positive relationships with 'go to' station personnel for help and advice. | Issues identified with the national laundry contract seems to have been exacerbated by the limitations of spare PPE stock within the Service. We were provided with numerous examples of personnel having difficulty identifying and accessing spare PPE following incidents. These issues were compounded by the perceived lack of a resilient and robust 24/7 process for the National Equipment Function to support operations out of hours. |
| | The changes to the UFAS policy have been well received and staff are engaged with and understand the rationale and benefits. At the time of our fieldwork, the use of the additional capacity to the Service hadn't been fully realised and as such, it was difficult to gauge the impact on performance. | Unhappy with the quality of the non-operational uniform now and there was a feeling that the standard had reduced considerably year on year. Examples included, reduced quality of material, inconsistent sizing, poor fitting and not being fit for purpose. |
| | With regard to the modernisation strategies, staff and internal and external partners were also somewhat sympathetic to the financial position of the Service and empathised with the need to change. | Some limitations to this offsite exercising seemed to be based on the lack of confidence of Supervisory Managers to complete the planning, risk assessment and authorisation processes. It is unclear whether this is from lack of development and/or the bureaucracy involved. |
| | A positive aspect reported regarding the changes, was the staff management and movement process. Staff reported that this was handled well by the LSO management teams in the WSDA, with peoples' personal circumstances and welfare heavily influencing transfers. The WSDA received no grievances throughout the process. Transfers weighted on personal need as opposed to operational need has inevitably resulted in increased DD of drivers and those personnel with specialist training. | Although based within and serving the WSDA, there didn't appear to be very strong operational management or operational preparedness links to JOC. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| | | With the introduction of the revised UFAS policy On-Call staff have real concerns regarding the balance of income, which has dropped, versus the commitment of hours to the role. There were instances of staff seriously considering their tenure within the Service due to this issue. |
| | | With regard to modernisation changes staff as well as internal and external partners reported that they felt the speed of the announcement was not appropriate, and that transparency, engagement, communication and consultation was very poor. They were also sceptical regarding the analysis process and critical of prior communication from the management teams, LSO and Senior Leadership Team (SLT), which has led to a sense of mistrust of senior management. Consequent engagement has gone someway to repairing this loss of trust but, in some respects, it has only reinforced it. Staff at all levels reported emotions and criticism routinely linked with the challenges of change process. |
| **Partnership** | Strong evidence that the Service is complying with its statutory duty and LSO management teams are playing an active part in each LA CPP strategic group as well as contributing capacity and resources to sub meetings and initiatives. The Service should be commended on the time and effort that is being invested in these relationships and the capacity and resources being used to deliver improvements to the community. The style and content of scrutiny committee performance papers was valued and liked. | It is worth noting that from our observation and feedback given, we judged that the Service's current investment in partnership work may not be balanced with the investment of capacity required for other Service priorities. This is compounded by the fact that it is challenging to measure the return on investment from participation and attendance at many of the meetings and investment of resources to many of the initiatives. At a time when there is a focus on capacity within the Service, we would highlight the need to evaluate and evidence investment in partnership work against the consequential added value and outcomes. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
|  | Strong evidence that the WSDA and LSO management teams are very active within Regional and Local resilience partnerships and are considered a valued member of that community. This activity is supported and enhanced well, by the involvement of a national cadre of CCOs. | |
| | Co-location is a key deliverable of the SESNCS and the JASG and the WSDA is an active participant. | Some partners we spoke to were keen to explore further asset sharing opportunities where appropriate and the Service should welcome this. |
| | We found evidence that the CAR had been considered at incidents and that resources had been requested, although this was limited. | OC staff had a working knowledge of the CAR and were able to confirm that it is infrequently used. |
| **People**  | Many staff in the WSDA were carrying out their role to a good standard and we found a predominance of self direction and starting, which should be commended. | We found very limited evidence of Service directed development, outwith the Training for Competence and refresher process. This position was reinforced by observation and feedback regarding; poor knowledge and application of policy, process and procedure; lack of confidence in the application of operational assurance process; lack of confidence in the risk assessment process, limited understanding of planning and performance process; limited knowledge of strategic values and mission and poor level of instructor knowledge. This was further aggravated by the high turnover of staff and consequential issues detailed previously. |
| | Personnel across the WSDA generally reported a feeling of being supported by their immediate managers and LSO management teams. We were very aware that the LSO management teams were very proactive with middle managers frequently attending stations and the need to improve engagement at a strategic level. | Lack of confidence in the Appraisal process to produce any tangible results from development requested and the subsequent scepticism of worth in the process. In addition, we also noted that the use of mentoring was very limited as it was not formally promoted and many staff found high turnover in their line manager or that their line manager or colleague had been in post for a shorter period than them. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| | Staff within the WSDA were very engaged with improving performance and delivering a good service to the community. | An issue raised at many stations and with partners was the frequent turnover of flexi-duty officers and that consistency was very hard to achieve with differing approaches and priorities on a regular basis. This was a source of frustration as personnel 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. That said, staff generally felt the visibility and engagement of management outwith the local team was very poor. |
| | Nationally the Service aspires to have a workforce which is representative of the people and communities of Scotland. The Service has a published Positive Action Strategy 19-22, which we were informed was being refreshed during a previous inspection. Its aim is to promote the SFRS as an Employer of Choice to Scotland's diverse communities, to attract, recruit and retain people from under-represented groups. | Genuine use of the Appraisal system was sporadic with it being used more commonly within the Wholetime than the On-Call staff. There was a general feeling of apathy towards the system, and it was very much seen as a 'tick box' exercise. Many staff did not see the benefit of the appraisal system, that good versus bad performance was rarely recognised and requests for development rarely materialised. There was also a very poor understanding of the system's part in good governance. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
|  | Strong evidence to suggest that absence within workplaces is managed as per the Policy and Procedures. | Staff in the WSDA we spoke to were frustrated with the Service's structure and governance. Staff thought that they were not empowered enough and lacked autonomy to really improve the organisation. This was normally connected with the concern that the Service seemed to be too centralised now, the perception was that Functions generally worked in silos to their own agenda and that everything was a priority within the Service. Managers reported that they felt they had poor credibility in stations as they could not really affect change or make decisions that were not entirely aligned to Functional process. Lastly, staff reported that they were disappointed that the Service had lost the agility developed during the response to COVID. |
| | Strong evidence to suggest that Station Health and Safety Audits are in the main being conducted throughout the WSDA and that issues identified, and areas of improvement recorded. | The WSDA, like other parts of the organisation, continues to find that employing the correct balance of employee to represent the community challenging. An issue frequently raised or observed at stations was the lack of or limitation of dignified facilities. This was predominantly observed at On-Call stations as they tended to be smaller and more compact. There is no evidence to suggest that the Positive Action Strategy has been reviewed. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
|  | Training Safety and Assurance Function have been developing a new Training Function Vision and Strategy 23-28. Their vision is to provide "clarity and resources to ensure we work safely, collaboratively and progressively to deliver excellence in operational training". The intention is to provide a Skills Maintenance Framework, Training Delivery Framework and Training Assets Framework to reset and improve the performance of training throughout the SFRS. There has been a decision to move all WSDA local training staff into the NIP, which will hopefully help to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of training. | Quality of absence management could be improved by the development of supervisory managers, which is ongoing as detailed previously. In addition, staff reported that systems for monitoring trigger levels were not automatic and required manual intervention and analysis. This seemed to be an inhibitor to efficient and effective use of the processes for station personnel. |
|  | Training in the main is driven by on station Supervisory managers supported by local training staff who are scheduled to attend regularly. This training is also supported at On-Call stations with the On-Call Support Watch Commanders. Staff routinely praised local training staff and standards, they were very supportive and engaged with training delivered locally. | We did find, that although all conducted recently, there were many versions of the Station Health and Safety Audit proforma in use with examples of v1.0 to v6.0 being used. The Service should ensure for consistency that the correct version be used. |
|  | The Service is actively working to increase numbers of SVQ assessors and verifiers. | There is a degree of concern in the WSDA regarding the removal of local training teams, given their positive influence. Staff are sceptical the changes will realise local performance improvement, and many see this as a continued move to centralisation and subsequent loss of local control. |
|  | It is understood that the content of the trainee course is continually reviewed following feedback and that it has been altered accordingly in the past. However, from the considerable feedback from supervisory officers regarding this issue, and in some cases feedback from trainees, it would seem that the course is not the finished product. | Many staff were very critical of training delivered at the NTC. This tended to be focused on frustration and disappointment regarding access to courses, reduced access to the facility, perceived underuse of the facility and standard of training when there. Staff also reported they felt there was an over reliance on digital learning with not enough delivery of practical training. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
|  | We can observe that Wholetime staff in the WSDA are generally maintaining core skills at or around the 90% mark, albeit they are generally below the 95% national standard. | We encountered trainees who had completed their development plans but finding it difficult to be signed off as being competent firefighters, due to a lack of SVQ Assessors and Verifiers nationally to approve these plans. Firefighters in development commented on being disadvantaged by the change in SVQ/Apprenticeship guidance part way through their 3-year development period, resulting in having to "start again" as well as adding undue stress to them and their colleagues. It was reported that this drop in completion rates continued to affect the ability to reach competence and the consequential negative financial impact. |
| | We can observe that Wholetime and On-Call staff in the WSDA are generally having specialist skills refreshed at a National Training Centre to a varying standard with some notable successes in SRT and MD. | Feedback from supervisory managers that trainees arriving on station didn't have the correct skill set. Examples given were lack of consistency from instructors, too much emphasis on community safety with not enough emphasis on basic skills such as casualty care, RTC and BA. |
| | Staff were generally aware of the Operational Assurance Recording and Reporting System (OARRS), with many reporting that they had used the system for Station Audits, Incident reviews or Incident/Event debriefs. Strong evidence to suggest that pre incident Station Audits are in the main being conducted throughout the WSDA and that areas of improvement and good practice are being recorded. Staff were very conversant with the Hot Debrief process and gave a lot of good evidence surrounding the positive use and learning from them being conducted at Level 1 incidents. We found some evidence of involvement with Level 4 and above, structured incident debriefs as well as for thematic events such as severe weather. | We can observe that Wholetime are generally having core skills refreshed at a National Training Centre to a varying standard. The percentage of staff who have had refresher training in Compartment Fire and Tactical Ventilation are well below the national standard. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| | | There are significant dips in this number for Heavy Rescue and USAR refresher training. We have been advised of continuing national difficulties relating to training in USAR, borne out in the statistics above and our previous report of the ESDA. |
| | | Experience within the WSDA demonstrated that there was still a lack of drivers and that many drivers were spending extended periods on that one skill. As detailed previously, some drivers noted that they had rarely worked in a non-driving role for lengthy periods on end. |
| | | Poor internet connection, and restricted access to and perceived poor quality of computers, particularly in On-Call fire stations. These are of particular relevance given the blended approach and emphasis on digital learning. Staff also provided feedback that it was particularly difficult accessing training equipment and that the ability to be placed on Training/Strategic reserve had almost disappeared. |
| | | We found a degree of apathy and disappointment towards the OA system with many staff reporting that they almost never got any feedback from being part of a process and when learning did get communicated it had taken far too long to be disseminated. |
| | | On some occasions we found that staff were unaware of their Station Audit outcome and that the information wasn't being routinely shared or debriefed. This was a bit disappointing, given the fact that they had been completed and the opportunity to improve was being missed. |
| | | We found no evidence of during incident monitoring but felt that this was mainly due to the national nature of the ICS as opposed to it being a local management issue. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
|  | | The predominance at Level 1 incidents seemed to be Hot Debrief with little structured debriefing thereafter. We found limited evidence of commanders conducting any face to face debriefs and almost universally, the predominance was to use the OA13 electronic system. It is not clear why this is the case, but some reasons given by staff were, the convenience of the electronic system, the capacity needed to conduct a face to face process and a lack of development and resulting confidence in debrief skills. Staff reported that involvement with an OA13 process rarely produced tangible learning. |

## EWDAB LSO Area Focus

**211**
Accidental
Dwelling Fires

**112**
Road Traffic
Accidents

**625**
Secondary
Fires

**2,612**
False
Alarms

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| **Prevention and Protection** | Good communication structure and we observed the use of an innovative communication and engagement booklet called 'The Buzz' which helped keep staff abreast of area news. | The loss of the CO fund was an issue identified in the area, with staff raising concern that they were restricted with purchasing and delivering deaf alerters, fire retardant bedding and secure letterboxes to the most vulnerable. |
| | Very good use of the TAP and engagement with partners to develop and deliver initiatives for prevention and protection. The area seems to be particularly active with water safety and provided good evidence of Partnership Approach to Water Safety (PAWS). | Maintaining the composition and skill level of FSEO and AO teams had been a challenge, which was exacerbated by the long term issues surrounding abatement and job evaluation. |
| **Response** | There is good support to On-Call staff from On-Call Support WCs. There were said to be a lot of positives coming from the role regarding recruitment and maintaining availability, it is thought to be well received by On-Call staff. | Staff from non-wildfire designated stations reported on numerous occasions concern regarding the lack of appropriate Wildfire PPE. There were occasions that staff had purchased their own equipment and medication to make attendance at these types of incidents more tolerable. |
| | Proactive management of On-Call availability and examples of innovative local staffing solutions, which made the system more user friendly. Continually monitoring the availability levels and were working hard, within the constraints of Finance and Conditions of Service, with the local crews to maintain and improve availability using innovative solutions. | Some stations had inadequate BA servicing facilities, limited access to recharging facilities, poor access to spare cylinders and limited facility for moving cylinders about safely. This gave the impression that training with and checking of BA set could be impeded or restricted on occasions. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| | Proactive use of finance and local contacts to secure a disused building for the remote rural crew at Salen and give them a designated station for the appliance and crew. | RAAC panel roofing issues are present at Milngavie and Helensburgh fire stations. This has been an issue for the staff at these stations for a significant amount of time. |
| | | The provision and maintenance of BA skills and equipment in remote rural locations can be very challenging and there were instances in remote rural stations where it was clearly problematic to maintain safe delivery. |
| | | Instances, predominantly in remote rural On-Call stations, where appliances had been changed over with no RTC hydraulic rescue equipment provided, and with management not being made aware of the position until an operational response was required. |
| | | The use of training staff and On-Call Support WC's for logistic and resource movement was a waste of their capacity and skill with a detriment being to their primary role. |
| **Partnership** | The LSO acts as the Chair of the CPP management Committee. The Council felt that it was important that another organisation led the group. The Service continues to be very involved in non-fire activities, such as mentoring of young people, vulnerable people, water and road safety education. | |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| **People** | Aware of routine recruitment campaign initiatives as well as locally developed and innovative marketing and recruitment to increase public awareness. Some highlights were the development of modular courses; the development of social media promotional material; the development of more flexible availability systems; the involvement of On-Call Support WCs; the development of station curtilage banners and increased use of dual contracts. We found the local management teams and station crews to generally be very engaged with On-Call recruitment and would commend them for their efforts. | That said, availability at some stations continues to be a challenge for the Service with recruitment and retention being two of the main factors. |
| | There has been some improvement in the On-Call recruitment process with the introduction of the PREP and PREP2 systems. These were generally well received and had made the recruitment process easier. | There is a degree of frustration around On-Call recruitment with a desire for more local involvement and control. Medical and fitness requirements for On-Call is said to be a challenge, particularly when there is a limited potential workforce and the standards being applied are inhibiting potential candidates from applying. |
| | The introduction and delivery of modular BA and TTM courses for On-Call Staff was given good feedback. As was the delivery of local courses for remote rural communities. | The training commitment for On-Call staff is still considered to be an inhibitor to recruitment. |
| | The local delivery of WT supervisory managers development course was good and provided important training for staff within the area. These sessions were well received by the staff and funded by the area. | Delivery of scrap cars for RTC training was said to be a challenge with crews reporting significant gaps between periods of practical training. |
| | The local delivery of On-Call supervisory manager development and engagement sessions was very good and provided important training, communication and feedback for staff within the area. These sessions were well received by the staff and funded by the area. | The provision of ICT equipment and infrastructure to some stations was reported as being limited and of poor quality. This was significant for completion of TFoC and was particularly relevant where some of the modules need to be completed individually, such as cyber security. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
|  | There was a moderate increased use, year on year, of dual contracts within the area assisting with maintaining availability. | Significant gaps in core and specialist refresher training for both WT and On-Call staff. |
| | There was a moderate decrease of WT and VDS absence, year on year, within the area assisting with maintaining availability. | Significant gaps in TFoC training for VDS staff. |
| | On-Call availability was above average compared to the WSDA average. | |

## ENSA LSO Area Focus

**291**
Accidental
Dwelling Fires

**143**
Road Traffic
Accidents

**1,198**
Secondary
Fires

**4,366**
False
Alarms

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| **Prevention and Protection** (P&P) | Very good use of the TAP and engagement with partners to develop and deliver initiatives for prevention and protection. The area seems to be particularly active with community wealth partnerships, building community care. Provided good evidence of delivering welfare packs, safe spaces and crisis boxes as well as CPR training within the community. | The loss of the CO fund was on issue identified in the area, with staff raising concern that they were restricted with purchasing and delivering deaf alerters, fire retardant bedding and secure letterboxes to the most vulnerable. |
| | Use of digital and printed non domestic Post Incident Response flyers to assist with education within the commercial community. | Maintaining the composition and skill level of FSEO and AO teams had been a challenge, which was exacerbated by the long term issues surrounding abatement and job evaluation. |
| **Response** | 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 regarding recruitment and maintaining availability, it is thought to be well received by On-Call staff. | Appliances routinely being sent to Dalmellington is creating challenges with increased road risk and operational preparedness for the affected station and personnel. |
| | Proactive management of On-Call availability and examples of innovative local staffing solutions, which made the system more user friendly. Continually monitoring the availability levels and were working hard, within the constraints of Finance and Conditions of Service, with the local crews to maintain and improve availability using innovative solutions. | Some stations had inadequate BA servicing facilities, limited access to recharging facilities, poor access to spare cylinders and limited facility for moving cylinders about safely. This gave the impression that training with and checking of BA set could be impeded or restricted on occasions. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| | | RAAC panel roofing issues are present at Stewarton fire station. This has been an issue for the staff at this station for a significant amount of time. |
| | | The provision and maintenance of BA skills and equipment in remote rural locations can be very challenging and there were instances in remote rural stations where it was clearly problematic to maintain safe delivery. |
| | | The use of training staff and On-Call Support WC's for logistic and resource movement was a waste of their capacity and skill with a detriment being to their primary role. |
| **Partnership** | Relationships within the CPP and Scrutiny process were very healthy, and we observed a good level of engagement and communication with partners. | |
| **People** | Aware of routine recruitment campaign initiatives as well as locally developed and innovative marketing and recruitment to increase public awareness. Some highlights were the development of modular courses; the development of social media promotional material; the development of more flexible availability systems; the involvement of On-Call Support WCs; the development of station curtilage banners and increased use of dual contracts. We found the local management teams and station crews to generally be very engaged with On-Call recruitment and would commend them for their efforts. | That said, availability at some stations continues to be a challenge for the Service with recruitment and retention being two of the main factors. |
| | There has been some improvement in the On-Call recruitment process with the introduction of the PREP and PREP2 systems. These were generally well received and had made the recruitment process easier. | There is a degree of frustration around On-Call recruitment with a desire for more local involvement and control. Medical and fitness requirements for On-Call is said to be a challenge, particularly when there is a limited potential workforce and the standards being applied are inhibiting potential candidates from applying. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
|  | The introduction and delivery of modular BA and TTM courses for On-Call Staff was given good feedback. As was the delivery of local courses for remote rural communities. | The training commitment for On-Call staff is still considered to be an inhibitor to recruitment. |
| | The local delivery of WT supervisory managers development course was good and provided important training for staff within the area. These sessions were well received by the staff and funded by the area. | Delivery of scrap cars for RTC training was said to be a challenge with crews reporting significant gaps between periods of practical training. |
| | The local delivery of On-Call supervisory manager development and engagement sessions was very good and provided important training, communication and feedback for staff within the area. These sessions were well received by the staff and funded by the area. | The provision of ICT equipment and infrastructure to some stations was reported as being limited and of poor quality. This was significant for completion of MPDP and was particularly relevant where some of the modules need to be completed individually, such as cyber security. |
| | There was a decrease of WT and On-Call absence, year on year, within the area assisting with maintaining availability. | There has been a lack of development and training regarding TSFF for Ardrossan station and there seems to be uncertainty as to whether it remains a capability for the station. |
| | | Significant gaps in some core and specialist skill refresher training for both WT and On-Call staff. |
| | | Significant gaps in TFoC training for On-Call staff. |
| | | There was a slight decrease in use, year on year, of dual contracts within the area assisting with maintaining availability. |
| | | On-Call availability was below average compared to the WSDA average. |

## D&G LSO Area Focus

**291**
Accidental
Dwelling Fires

**78**
Road Traffic
Accidents

**216**
Secondary
Fires
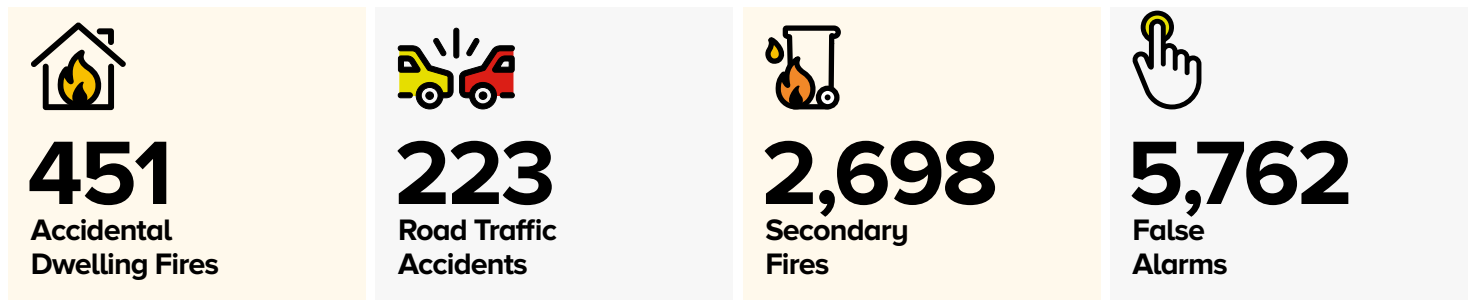
**1,152**
False
Alarms

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| **Prevention and Protection**  | Very good use of the TAP and engagement with partners to develop and deliver initiatives for prevention and protection. Provided good evidence of hosting joint training, hoarding presentations and delivery of training to P7 children throughout the area based on the school syllabus. | Communication within P&P could be improved locally and nationally as per the EFQM outcomes. |
| | Conducted a pilot of the EFQM, which provided a good insight into areas of strength and areas for improvement. | |
| | There were good examples of Station Plans linked to primary plans, which were visible on station and staff were aware of them. | |
| **Response**  | A report has been developed regarding the SWaH issue and an outcome as to the way forward is awaited. | The standard of SWaH training, procedures and equipment remains unaligned to that of the rest of the Service and presents a risk to the organisation. |
| | 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 regarding recruitment and maintaining availability, it is thought to be well received by On-Call staff. | Staff from non-wildfire designated stations reported on numerous occasions concern regarding the lack of appropriate Wildfire PPE. There were occasions that staff had purchased their own equipment and medication to make attendance at these types of incidents more tolerable. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| | Proactive management of On-Call availability and examples of innovative local staffing solutions, which made the system more user friendly. Continually monitoring the availability levels and were working hard, within the constraints of Finance and Conditions of Service, with the local crews to maintain and improve availability using innovative solutions. | Some stations had inadequate BA servicing facilities, limited access to recharging facilities, poor access to spare cylinders and limited facility for moving cylinders about safely. This gave the impression that training with and checking of BA set could be impeded or restricted on occasions. |
| | | The provision and maintenance of BA skills and equipment in remote rural locations can be very challenging and there were instances in remote rural stations where it was clearly problematic to maintain safe delivery. |
| | | The use of training staff and On-Call Support WC's for logistic and resource movement was a waste of their capacity and skill with a detriment being to their primary role. |
| **Partnership** | Positive use of the CAR with proactive engagement to add capabilities and skills to it. | Identified that partnership working within the area could be improved with specific examples highlighted by the EFQM process. |
| **People** | Aware of routine recruitment campaign initiatives as well as locally developed and innovative marketing and recruitment to increase public awareness. Some highlights were the development of modular courses; the development of social media promotional material; the development of more flexible availability systems; the involvement of On-Call Support WCs; the development of station curtilage banners and increased use of dual contracts. We found the local management teams and station crews to generally be very engaged with On-Call recruitment and would commend them for their efforts. | Availability at some stations continues to be a challenge for the Service with recruitment and retention being two of the main factors. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|-------|-------|------|
|  | There has been some improvement in the On-Call recruitment process with the introduction of the PREP and PREP2 systems. These were generally well received and had made the recruitment process easier. | There is a degree of frustration around On-Call recruitment with a desire for more local involvement and control. Medical and fitness requirements for On-Call is said to be a challenge, particularly when there is a limited potential workforce and the standards being applied are inhibiting potential candidates from applying. |
| | The introduction and delivery of modular BA and TTM courses for On-Call Staff was given good feedback. As was the delivery of local courses for remote rural communities. | The training commitment for On-Call staff is still considered to be an inhibitor to recruitment. |
| | There was a decrease of WT and On-Call absence, year on year, within the area assisting with maintaining availability. | Delivery of scrap cars for RTC training was said to be a challenge with crews reporting significant gaps between periods of practical training. |
| | There was an increase in use, year on year, of dual contracts within the area assisting with maintaining availability. | The provision of ICT equipment and infrastructure to some stations was reported as being limited and of poor quality. This was significant for completion of TFoC and was particularly relevant where some of the modules need to be completed individually, such as cyber security. |
| | On-Call availability was significantly above average compared to the WSDA average. | Some gaps in core and specialist refresher training for both WT and On-Call staff. |
| | | Significant gaps in TFoC training for On-Call staff. |

## LAN LSO Area Focus

**451**
Accidental
Dwelling Fires

**223**
Road Traffic
Accidents

**2,698**
Secondary
Fires
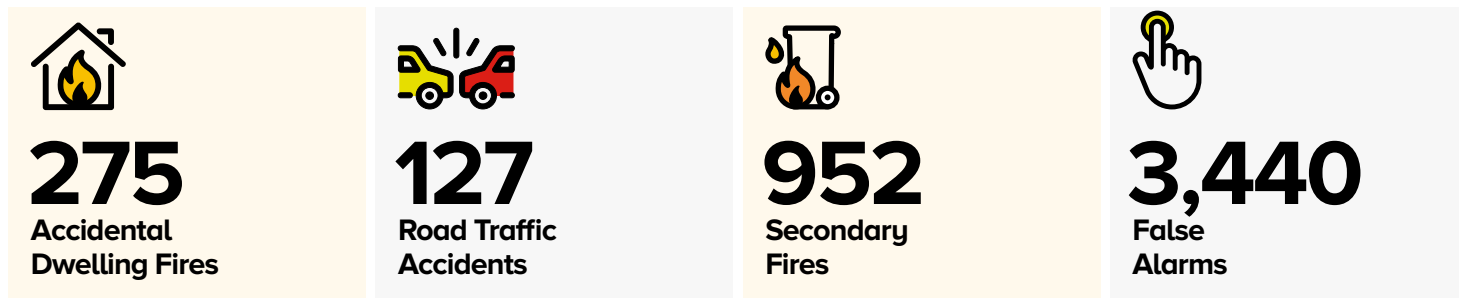
**5,762**
False
Alarms

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| **Prevention and Protection** P&P | Very good use of the TAP and engagement with partners to develop and deliver initiatives for prevention and protection. Provided good evidence of initiatives, including the salt sticks project, bonfire discussion groups and fire reach project. | The loss of the CO fund was an issue identified in the area, with staff raising concern that they were restricted with purchasing and delivering deaf alerters, fire retardant bedding and secure letterboxes to the most vulnerable. |
| | | Maintaining the composition and skill level of FSEO and AO teams had been a challenge, which was exacerbated by the long term issues surrounding abatement and job evaluation. |
| | There were good examples of Station Plans linked to primary plans, which were visible on station and staff were aware of them. | |
| **Response** | Good example of the development of a local training and exercising schedule to ensure a programme is delivered over an extended period. | RAAC panel roofing issues are present at Cumbernauld fire station. This has been an issue for the staff at this station for a significant amount of time. |
| | 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 regarding recruitment and maintaining availability, it is thought to be well received by On-Call staff. | Staff from non wildfire designated station reported on numerous occasions concern regarding the lack of appropriate Wildfire PPE. There were occasions that staff had purchased their own equipment and medication to make attendance at these types of incidents more tolerable. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| | Proactive management of On-Call availability and examples of innovative local staffing solutions, which made the system more user friendly. Continually monitoring the availability levels and were working hard, within the constraints of Finance and Conditions of Service, with the local crews to maintain and improve availability using innovative solutions. | The provision and maintenance of BA skills and equipment in remote rural locations can be very challenging and there were instances in remote rural stations where it was clearly problematic to maintain safe delivery. |
| **Partnership** | Relationships within the CPP and Scrutiny process were very healthy, and we observed a good level of engagement and communication with partners. | |
| **People** | Aware of routine recruitment campaign initiatives as well as locally developed and innovative marketing and recruitment to increase public awareness. Some highlights were the development of modular courses; the development of social media promotional material; the development of more flexible availability systems; the involvement of On-Call Support WCs; the development of station curtilage banners and increased use of dual contracts. We found the local management teams and station crews to generally be very engaged with On-Call recruitment and would commend them for their efforts. | That said, availability at some stations continues to be a challenge for the Service with recruitment and retention being two of the main factors. |
| | There has been some improvement in the On-Call recruitment process with the introduction of the PREP and PREP2 systems. These were generally well received and had made the recruitment process easier. | There is a degree of frustration around On-Call recruitment with a desire for more local involvement and control. Medical and fitness requirements for On-Call is said to be a challenge, particularly when there is a limited potential workforce and the standards being applied are inhibiting potential candidates from applying. |
| | The introduction and delivery of modular BA and TTM courses for On-Call Staff was given good feedback. As was the delivery of local courses for remote rural communities. | The training commitment for On-Call staff is still considered to be an inhibitor to recruitment. |

Inspection of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service          **West Service Delivery Area**                                    **87**

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
|  | There was a decrease of WT absence, year on year, within the area assisting with maintaining availability. | Delivery of scrap cars for RTC training was said to be a challenge with crews reporting significant gaps between periods of practical training. |
| | There was an increase in use, year on year, of dual contracts within the area assisting with maintaining availability. | The provision of ICT equipment and infrastructure to some stations was reported as being limited and of poor quality. This was significant for completion of TFoC and was particularly relevant where some of the modules need to be completed individually, such as cyber security. |
| | The local delivery of supervisory and middle manager development course was good and provided important training for staff within the area. These sessions were well received by the staff and funded by the area. | Some gaps in core and specialist refresher training for both WT and On-Call staff. |
| | | Some gaps in TFoC training for On-Call staff. |
| | | On-Call availability was significantly below average compared to the WSDA average. |

## ERRI LSO Area Focus

| 275 | 127 | 952 | 3,440 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Accidental Dwelling Fires | Road Traffic Accidents | Secondary Fires | False Alarms |

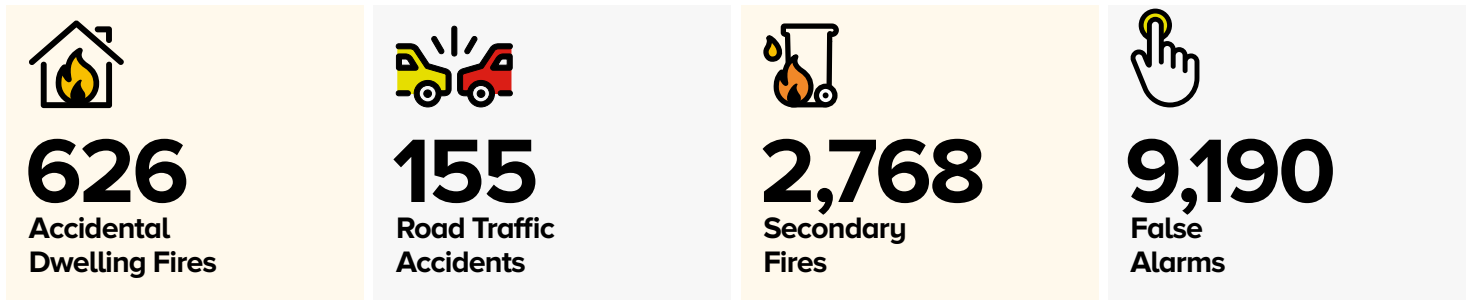| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| **Prevention and Protection** | Very good use of the TAP and engagement with partners to develop and deliver initiatives for prevention and protection. Provided good evidence of initiatives, including the schools' engagement programme, water risk intervention and a fire skills course pilot. | Maintaining the composition and skill level of FSEO and AO teams had been a challenge, which was exacerbated by the long term issues surrounding fixed term contracts. |
| | | Maintaining the composition and skill level of FSEO and AO teams had been a challenge, which was exacerbated by the long term issues surrounding abatement and job evaluation. |
| | There were good examples of Station Plans linked to primary plans, which were visible on station and staff were aware of them. | |
| **Response** | 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 regarding recruitment and maintaining availability, it is thought to be well received by On-Call staff. | The provision and maintenance of BA skills and equipment in remote rural locations can be very challenging and there were instances in remote rural stations where it was clearly problematic to maintain safe delivery. |
| | Proactive management of On-Call availability and examples of innovative local staffing solutions, which made the system more user friendly. Continually monitoring the availability levels and were working hard, within the constraints of Finance and Conditions of Service, with the local crews to maintain and improve availability using innovative solutions. | |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| **Partnership** | Relationships within the CPP and Scrutiny process were very healthy, good example of working within a community partnership hub arrangement. | |
| **People** | Aware of routine recruitment campaign initiatives as well as locally developed and innovative marketing and recruitment to increase public awareness. Some highlights were the development of modular courses; the development of social media promotional material; the development of more flexible availability systems; the involvement of On-Call Support WCs; the development of station curtilage banners and increased use of dual contracts. We found the local management teams and station crews to generally be very engaged with On-Call recruitment and would commend them for their efforts. | That said, availability at some stations continues to be a challenge for the Service with recruitment and retention being two of the main factors. |
| | There has been some improvement in the On-Call recruitment process with the introduction of the PREP and PREP2 systems. These were generally well received and had made the recruitment process easier. | There is a degree of frustration around On-Call recruitment with a desire for more local involvement and control. Medical and fitness requirements for On-Call is said to be a challenge, particularly when there is a limited potential workforce and the standards being applied are inhibiting potential candidates from applying. |
| | The introduction and delivery of modular BA and TTM courses for On-Call Staff was given good feedback. As was the delivery of local courses for remote rural communities. | The training commitment for On-Call staff is still considered to be an inhibitor to recruitment. |
| | There was a decrease of WT and On-Call absence, year on year, within the area assisting with maintaining availability. | The provision of ICT equipment and infrastructure to some stations was reported as being limited and of poor quality. This was significant for completion of TFoC and was particularly relevant where some of the modules need to be completed individually, such as cyber security. |
| | There was an increase in use, year on year, of dual contracts within the area assisting with maintaining availability. | There has been a lack of development and training regarding TSFF for Greenock station and there seems to be uncertainty as to whether it remains a capability for the station. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| | On-Call availability was significantly above average compared to the WSDA average. | Some gaps in core and specialist refresher training for both WT and On-Call staff. |
| | | Some gaps in TFoC training for WT and On-Call staff. |

## CoG LSO Area Focus

**626**
Accidental
Dwelling Fires

**155**
Road Traffic
Accidents

**2,768**
Secondary
Fires

**9,190**
False
Alarms

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| **Prevention and Protection** | Very good use of the TAP and engagement with partners to develop and deliver initiatives for prevention and protection. Provided good evidence of initiatives, including HMP Barlinnie reoffending project, winter packs, pantries, city road safety and Clyde water safety. | Maintaining the composition and skill level of FSEO and AO teams had been a challenge, which was exacerbated by the long term issues surrounding abatement, job evaluation and fixed term contracts. |
| | Innovative use of the QR system to develop public safety information that can be scanned and is more conveniently used. | The additional work from ACCM and STL is time consuming and hasn't been factored into routine capacity. |
| | Additional capacity has been released to account for ACCM workload for the current financial year. | Station audit outcomes not being routinely shared with station based personnel to allow improvement. |
| | Good use of the operations briefing note system for informing station personnel of P&P concerns with premises. | No knowledge of the Fire Precautions (Sub-surface Railway Stations) Regulations and the potential implications, despite previous HMFSI observations on a potential policy void. |

| Theme | Highs | Lows |
|---|---|---|
| **Response** | Additional capacity released to augment staffing for water rescue. | No SSOP for Glasgow underground or the Clyde Tunnel has been developed and exercised. |
| | | OI information not aligning with Station boundaries, with the effect that a neighbouring station has the responsibility for identifying, developing and reviewing risk information that they won't primarily respond to. |
| | | Concern that the river Clyde is a very idiosyncratic risk and that the current response model may not be appropriate to the risk. |
| | | Concern regarding the temporary withdrawal of three appliances and the perceived lack of resilience. |
| | | Concern regarding the resilience of the HRA fleet and that the implementation of the strategy has exacerbated that position. |
| **Partnership** | Relationships within the CPP and Scrutiny process were very healthy, good example of working within partnership to engage LA regarding SSRP and appliance withdrawal. | |
| **People** | There was a decrease of WT absence, year on year, within the area assisting with maintaining availability. | There has been a lack of development and training regarding TSFF for Govan station and there seems to be uncertainty as to whether it remains a capability for the station. |
| | | Some gaps in core and specialist refresher training for both WT staff. |
| | | Some gaps in TFoC training for WT staff. |

# **Appendix B:** 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 and

- 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 C: How this inspection was carried out

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

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, Robert Scott QFSM.

The following persons also contributed to the Inspection and to the report:

**Brian McKenzie**, Assistant Inspector

**David Young**, Assistant Inspector

**Graeme Fraser**, Assistant Inspector

**John Joyce QFSM**, Assistant Inspector

**Martin Riach**, Inspection Support Manager

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

**Gillian Buchanan**, Project Manager (SFRS secondee)

**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 the West;

- in person and virtual meetings with Partners of the SFRS;

- an anonymous survey of all SFRS staff based within the WSDA and

- observation of development, training and exercising sessions within the WSDA.

# Bibliography

1.  **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - Good Governance Framework 2023**

2.  **His Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate - 'Arrangements for Firefighting in High Rise Buildings' 2022**

3.  **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - Strategic Asset Management Plan: Property 23-28**

4.  **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - Strategic Asset Management Plan: Fleet 22-27**

5.  **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - Strategic Asset Management Plan: Equipment 23-28**

6.  **His Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate - 'Climate Change: managing the operational impact on fires and other weather-related emergencies 2023**

7.  **Scottish Government - Fire and Rescue Framework 2022**

8.  **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - Mental Health Strategy 20-23**

9.  **His Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate - 'Mental Health and Wellbeing Support in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service' 2023**

10. **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - Training Function Vision and Strategy 23-28**
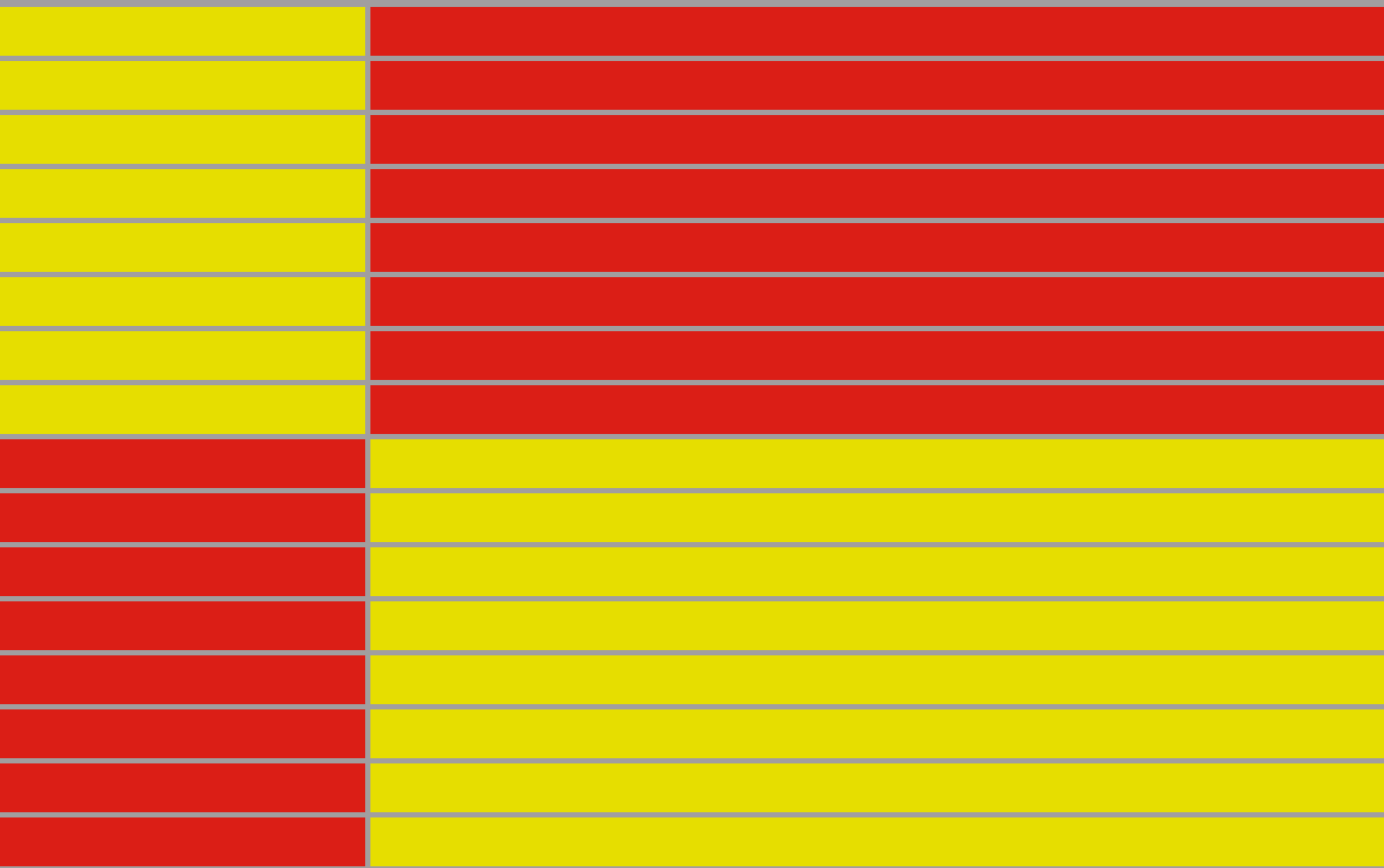
# Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| **ACCM** | Aluminium Composite Cladding Material |
| **ALP** | Aerial Ladder Platform |
| **AO** | Auditing Officer |
| **ARC** | Asset Resource Centre |
| **BA** | Breathing Apparatus |
| **BC** | Business Continuity |
| **BCMP** | Business Continuity Management Plan |
| **BCP** | Business Continuity Planning |
| **CAR** | Community Asset Register |
| **CARP** | Combined Aerial Rescue Pump |
| **CAT** | Community Action Team |
| **CCA** | Civil Contingencies Act 2004 |
| **CCO** | Civil Contingencies Officer |
| **CO** | Chief Officer |
| **CoG** | City of Glasgow |
| **CoMAH** | Control of Major Accident Hazards |
| **CPD** | Continuous Professional Development |
| **CPP** | Community Planning Partnership |
| **CPR** | Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation |
| **CRR** | Community Risk Register |
| **CS** | Central Staffing |
| **CSET** | Community Safety Engagement Tool |
| **CSU** | Command Support Unit |
| **D&G** | Dumfries and Galloway |
| **DACO** | Deputy Assistant Chief Officer |
| **DD** | Detached Duty |
| **DIM** | Detection, Identification and Monitoring |
| **EFQM** | European Foundation for Quality Management |

| | |
|---|---|
| **ENSA** | East, North and South Ayrshire |
| **ERRI** | East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde |
| **ESDA** | East Service Delivery Area |
| **EWDAB** | East and West Dunbartonshire, Argyll and Bute |
| **FDO** | Flexi Duty Officer |
| **FIT** | Fire Investigation Team |
| **FPS** | Firefighters Pension Scheme 1992 |
| **FRS** | Fire and Rescue Service |
| **FTE** | Full Time Equivalent |
| **FSA** | Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 |
| **FSEO** | Fire Safety Enforcement Officer |
| **FSRA** | Fire Safety Risk Assessment |
| **5WDS** | Five Watch Duty System |
| **GIN** | General Information Note |
| **HazMat** | Hazardous Material |
| **HFSV** | Home Fire Safety Visit |
| **HMFSI** | His Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate |
| **HR** | Human Resources |
| **HRA** | High Reach Appliance |
| **HRE** | Hydraulic Rescue Equipment |
| **HRU** | Heavy Rescue Unit |
| **HSE** | Health and Safety Executive |
| **HVP** | High Volume Pump |
| **ICS** | Incident Command System |
| **JASG** | Joint Asset Sharing Group |
| **JOC** | Johnstone Operations Control |
| **KPI** | Key Performance Indicator |
| **LA** | Local Authority |
| **LALO** | Local Authority Liaison Officer |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **LAN** | North and South Lanarkshire | | **RNLI** | Royal National Lifeboat Institution |
| **LCMS** | Learning Content Management System | | **RR** | Rope Rescue |
| **LEDP** | Local Enforcement Delivery Plan | | **RRP** | Regional Resilience Partnership |
| **LFRP** | Local Fire and Rescue Plan | | **RRU** | Rapid Response Unit |
| **LPDP** | Local Prevention Delivery Plan | | **RTC** | Road Traffic Collision |
| **LRP** | Local Resilience Partnership | | **RtW** | Return to Work |
| **LSO** | Local Senior Officer | | **SAMPE** | Strategic Asset Management Plan - Equipment |
| **MCA** | Maritime and Coastguard Agency | | **SAMPF** | Strategic Asset Management Plan - Fleet |
| **MD** | Mass Decontamination | | **SAMPP** | Strategic Asset Management Plan - Property |
| **MHW** | Mental Health and Wellbeing | | **SAS** | Scottish Ambulance Service |
| **MIU** | Major Incident Unit | | **SDA** | Service Delivery Area |
| **MoRR** | Management of Road Risk | | **SEPA** | Scottish Environment Protection Agency |
| **NIP** | National Instructor Pool | | **SESNCS** | Scottish Emergency Service National Collaboration Strategy |
| **NOG** | National Operational Guidance | | **SFRS** | Scottish Fire and Rescue Service |
| **NTC** | National Training Centre | | **SLT** | Strategic Leadership Team |
| **OA** | Operational Assurance | | **SOP** | Standard Operating Procedure |
| **OAV** | Operational Assurance Visit | | **SORU** | Special Operations Response Unit |
| **OARRS** | Operational Assurance Recording and Reporting System | | **SRT** | Swift Water Rescue Team |
| **OC** | Operations Control | | **SSOP** | Site Specific Operating Procedure |
| **OI** | Operational Intelligence | | **SSRP** | Strategic Service Review Programme |
| **OL** | Organisational Learning | | **STL** | Short Term Let |
| **PAWS** | Partnership Approach to Water Safety | | **SVQ** | Scottish Vocational Qualification |
| **PDIR** | Post Domestic Incident Response | | **SWaH** | Safe Working at Heights |
| **PISP** | Post Incident Support Process | | **TacAd** | Tactical Advisor |
| **PPE** | Personal Protective Equipment | | **TAP** | Tactical Action Plan |
| **PPED** | Prevention and Protection Enforcement Database | | **TASS** | Think Act Stay Safe |
| **PRE** | Powered Rescue Equipment | | **TfoC** | Training for Competence |
| **PREP** | Pre-Recruitment Engagement Programme | | **TIC** | Thermal Image Camera |
| **RAAC** | Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete | | **TOM** | Target Operating Model |
| **RDS** | Retained Duty System | | **TSAB** | Training Safety and Assurance Board |

| | |
|---|---|
| **TSFF** | Tactical Ship Firefighting |
| **TTM** | Task and Task Management |
| **UFAS** | Unwanted Fire Alarm Signal |
| **USAR** | Urban Search and Rescue |
| **VDS** | Volunteer Duty System |
| **WC** | Watch Commander |
| **WoSRRP** | West of Scotland Regional Resilience Partnership |
| **WSDA** | West Service Delivery Area |
| **WT** | Wholetime |