



ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

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» WELCOME

Welcome to the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) Annual Report. 2021-2022 has been an important year for the Service.

2021-22 saw changes to our Senior Leadership Team, who have been establishing plans to take our Service forward on its journey of continuous improvement. These changes include Wayne's appointment as Chief Fire Officer and the appointments of Nikki Richards as Deputy Chief Executive, Mark Arkwell as Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Katie Mills as Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

Despite a number of significant incidents and COVID-19 continuing to present challenges for our Service and communities, we still hit several important milestones during this time. For example, we are delighted that firefighters began to serve their local communities from the new community fire station in Theale in September 2021. This new state-of-the-art facility will help us to deliver on our strategic commitment to ensure that our fire stations, people, and resources are placed firmly at the heart of local communities.

New equipment has also been deployed at fire stations across the County, further strengthening the Service's capabilities to respond to the people of Royal Berkshire in times of emergency. This included the deployment of six new specialist off-road vehicles to five on-call fire stations and Caversham Road Fire Station. We also introduced a new Aerial Ladder Platform, improving the Service's response to complex operations within high-rise buildings.

To celebrate the achievements of staff and volunteers in responding to a challenging 18 months, we held a Celebration Event in October 2021. The event recognised those that took on additional responsibilities during the pandemic, congratulated the staff recognised in our Virtual Awards Ceremony and formally welcomed firefighters who completed their training at the start of 2020 and went straight to work, serving their communities on fire stations.

The following report highlights the incredible amount of work completed in 2021-22 and we are proud of all Members, staff, and volunteers who have contributed to making it possible. Over the next 12 months, we will continue to work hard to ensure that the Service has the right resources, people, and plans to build on the work completed in 2021-22.



Councillor Colin Dudley
Chairman
Royal Berkshire Fire Authority



Wayne Bowcock
Chief Fire Officer
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service



» YOUR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides prevention, protection, and response services across the County of Berkshire. Twelve wholetime fire stations and five on-call fire stations cover 488 square miles from Langley in the East to Lambourn in the West. It serves a diverse cultural population of approximately 949,000, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The Service's highly-trained fire crews deal with incidents ranging from road and rail accidents to fuel and chemical spills, aviation and waterway accidents, collapsed buildings, large animal rescues, and, of course, fires.


Along with providing a swift and effective response to incidents, one of the Service's aims is to educate people on how to prevent fires and other emergencies. Our Service works with schools, businesses, residents, and community groups throughout Royal Berkshire to raise awareness and educate people about a wide variety of safety issues.


The Service has joined forces with Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service and Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service to establish a shared emergency call handling centre, Thames Valley Fire Control Service.

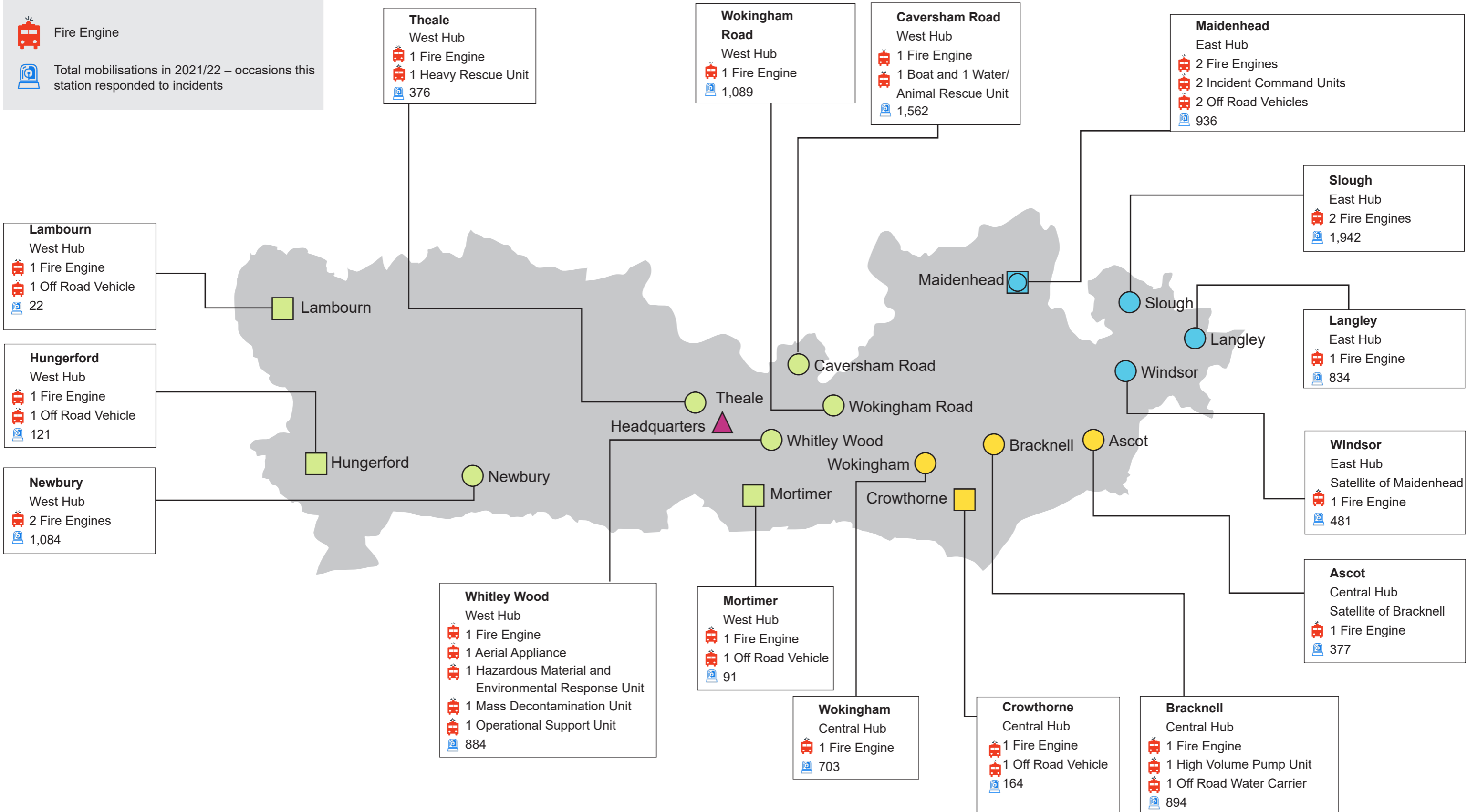



» YOUR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

KEY

 Fire Engine

 Total mobilisations in 2021/22 – occasions this station responded to incidents



 West Hub  Central Hub  East Hub



» ABOUT US

In our [Corporate Plan and IRMP 2019-23](#), Royal Berkshire Fire Authority set RBFRS six public facing commitments:

1. We will provide education and advice on how to prevent fires and other emergencies.
2. We will ensure a swift and appropriate response when called to emergencies.
3. We will provide advice, consultation and enforcement in relation to fire safety standards in buildings.
4. We will seek opportunities to contribute to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda, whilst delivering our core functions.
5. We will ensure that RBFRS provides good value for money.
6. We will work with Central Government and key stakeholders in the interests of the people of Royal Berkshire.

For 2021-22, RBFRS set an additional four objectives:

1. We will recruit, train and develop our people to ensure we create a safe, professional and capable workforce that are supported to become the best public servants they can be for the residents of Berkshire.
2. We will manage RBFRS in accordance with best practice, understanding and continuous improvement, learning from events and being transparent in our compliance.
3. We will be strong and visible in our leadership in developing a diverse and inclusive 'one team' culture where everyone's contribution is valued and positive behaviours are recognised.
4. We will explore collaboration opportunities to ensure we deliver effective and efficient services to the people we serve.



» AWARDS AND ACCREDITATIONS



We are proud to have achieved the Level Three 'Leader' status in the Disability Confident Scheme this year. We have undertaken a number of activities to demonstrate our commitment to the scheme, including our involvement with Leonard Cheshire's Change 100 scheme.



This year, two members of staff were nominated for Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) awards and another won the award for 'Addressing Health Inequalities in the Community' for their work during the pandemic.



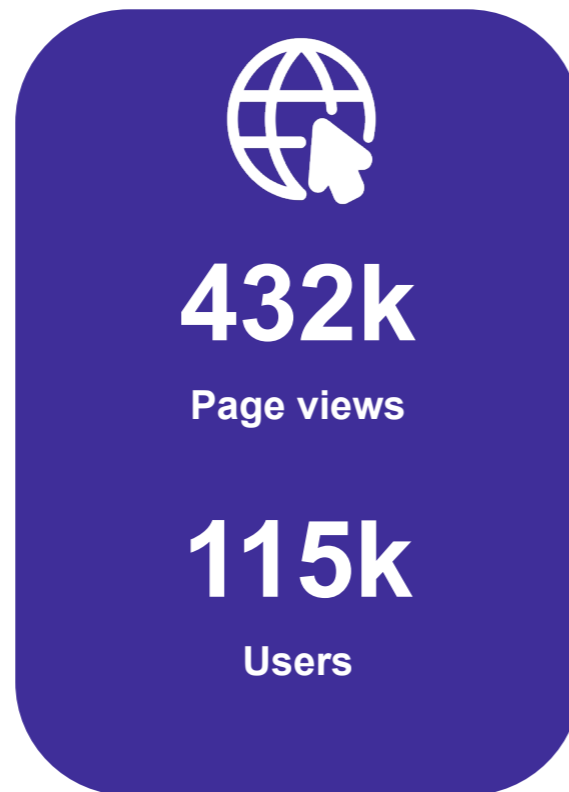
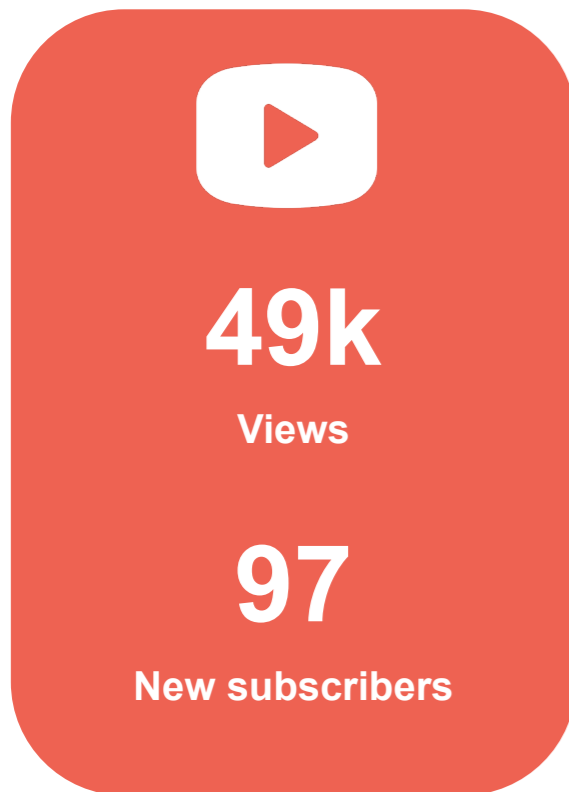
Memberships with Stonewall and the Business Disability Forum have been maintained this year and a new membership with Inclusive Employers has been gained to provide further support and resources to ensure our activities and services are inclusive for all.



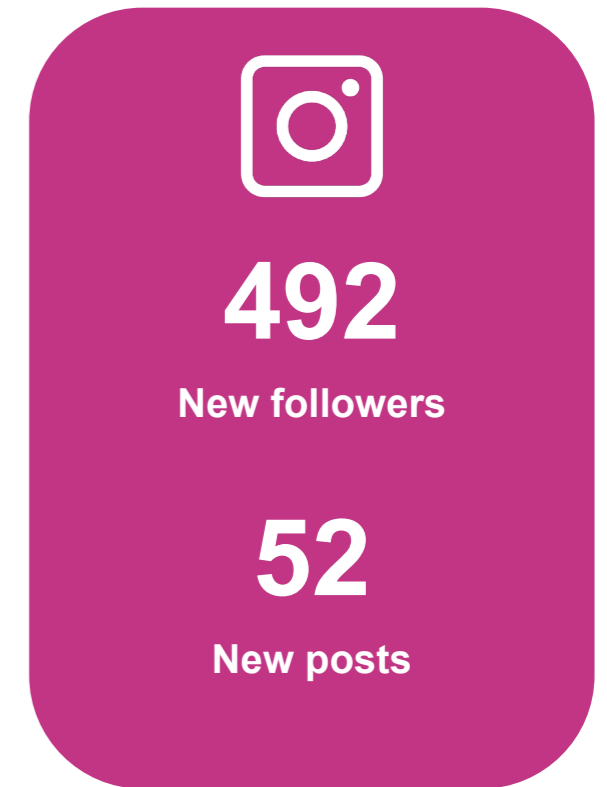
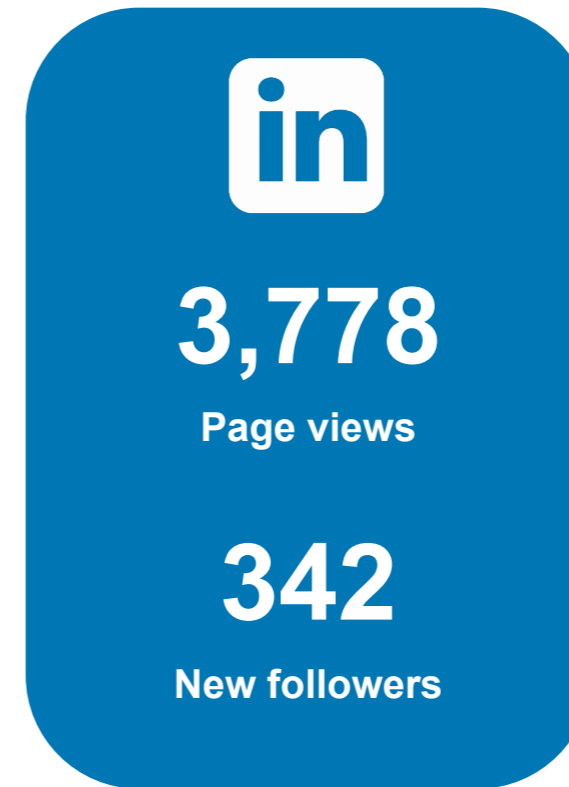
We are delighted that Becci Jefferies, Head of HR and Learning and Development, was awarded a British Empire Medal for her work to transform health and wellbeing services for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.



» SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2021-22



» SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2021-22





» TIMELINE OF THE LAST YEAR (APRIL 2021 - MARCH 2022)

Here is a summary of some of the main events that have taken place in the past year at RBFRS.



ROWE COURT

Our teams worked with Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service and Reading Borough Council in responding to a fatal fire at a block of flats in Rowe Court, Reading, in December 2021. At the height of the fire, there were around 50 firefighters at the scene from stations across Berkshire and Oxfordshire, supported by Officers and specialist equipment, including our Aerial Ladder Platform and the Urban Search and Rescue Team from Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.



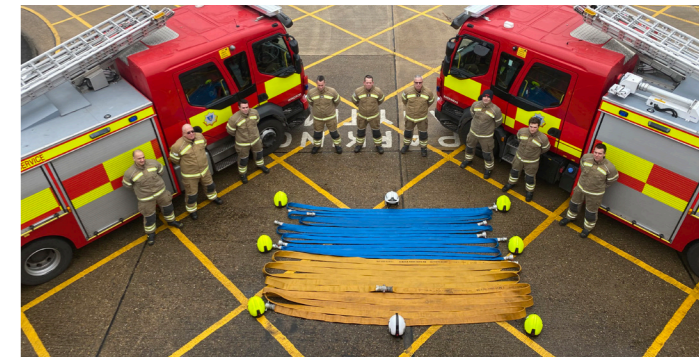
THEALE COMMUNITY FIRE STATION OPERATIONAL

In October 2021, firefighters began serving the community from Theale Community Fire Station, a major milestone for the Service. This new station supports our ongoing commitment to work collaboratively with our emergency service partners, offering a shared location for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service.



CELEBRATION EVENT

On Saturday, 2 October, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service held an event to celebrate the outstanding achievements of staff and volunteers in responding during a challenging 18 months, recognise those that took on additional responsibilities during the pandemic, congratulate the staff recognised in our Virtual Awards Ceremony and formally welcome firefighters who completed their training at the start of 2020 and went straight to work, serving their local communities on fire stations.



SUPPORTING UKRAINE

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service proudly joined fire and rescue services across the country in providing support to assist with the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Slough Fire Station's charity car wash raised over £5,000 for the British Red Cross - Ukraine Appeal. The Service also donated 5,000 items of kit, equipment and vehicles to Ukrainian firefighters. Firefighters at Maidenhead and Windsor Fire Stations also showed their solidarity by creating the Ukraine flag from their hose reels (pictured).



DON'T DRINK AND DROWN

In April 2021, we teamed up with our partners, Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service, to promote the Don't Drink and Drown Campaign.



CROWTHORNE TRAIL WINNERS

We were delighted that Crowthorne Community Fire Station won the Crowthorne Trails Business prize for their Easter display. A rainbow and clouds was created for the community room window, which included some fire safety questions and answers.



NEW VEHICLES AT STATIONS

Six new Ford Ranger vehicles were deployed at five on-call fire stations and Caversham Road Fire Station. They have since been providing logistical support at incidents.



GAMBIA EQUIPMENT DONATION

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority donated the Dennis Elite Water Carrier, and range of other firefighting equipment, to a charity partnership that works to assist the emergency response of the Gambia Fire and Ambulance Service.

ARMED FORCES WEEK

The Service celebrated Armed Forces Week with several activities, but most prominent was the third virtual meeting of our Armed Forces Veteran's Hub on Friday, 25 June.

CELEBRATING PRIDE

We were once again able to celebrate Reading Pride in person with our communities. Teams from across the Service attended to engage with local residents and host a stall.



EMERGENCY SERVICES DAY

We once again proudly supported Emergency Services Day, honouring everyone working and volunteering in the emergency services. Staff joined in the two minutes' silence to mark the day.

HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS

All 187 high rise buildings in Berkshire were visited by June 2021, enabling us to ensure appropriate regulatory activities were in place.



OPENING OF CROWTHORNE COMMUNITY FIRE STATION

Crowthorne Community Fire Station officially opened. The Station is the Service's second tri-service community fire station, offering a shared location for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service.

FIRST IN PERSON ARMED FORCES VETERAN'S HUB

Our Service hosted its first in-person Armed Forces Veterans' Hub event on 17 November, at Crowthorne Community Fire Station.

THAMES VALLEY FIRE SERVICES CELEBRATE COLLABORATION

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services gathered at Blenheim Palace to showcase the successes of their ongoing collaboration to deliver increased effectiveness for the communities we serve.

NEW AERIAL LADDER PLATFORM OPERATIONAL

A new Aerial Ladder Platform (high reach vehicle) became operational, further strengthening the Service's capabilities to respond to the people of Royal Berkshire in times of emergency.



BECCI JEFFERIES RECOGNISED IN QUEEN'S NEW YEAR'S HONOURS

In the New Year's Honours, Becci Jefferies, Head of HR and Learning and Development, was awarded a British Empire Medal for her work to transform health and wellbeing services.

CONSULTATIONS

In January, the Service ran two important consultations. The Council Tax Consultation asked residents for their opinion on an increase in Council Tax by £5 for the financial year 2022/23. The Automatic Fire Alarm Consultation also began in January, which you can read more about on page 21.

THEALE COMMUNITY FIRE STATION ARTWORK COMPETITION

Art students from Theale Green School took part in an art competition for the new Theale Community Fire Station. Over 40 pieces of artwork were submitted. Congratulations to Evan Rose, in Year 8, who was selected as the winner.

STORM EUNICE

On 18 February, Berkshire was hit by Storm Eunice. The Service responded to a number of incidents as a result and between midnight and 5pm, Thames Valley Fire Control Service answered more than 400 calls.



INTRODUCING REFUGEES TO OUR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

In March, our Service visited a hotel in West Berkshire to provide fire safety advice in various languages to local refugees, who had been arriving in the UK from Afghanistan through the Afghan Refugee Resettlement Programme.



>> OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS 2021-2022



7,300

Emergency incidents responded to



77.2%

Of occasions we responded within 10 minutes



814

Number of primary fires



730

Number of secondary fires



388

Road traffic collisions



1,468

Other services



6,734

Number of Safe and Well Visits completed



947

Number of full Fire Safety Audits carried out



98.6%

Of eligible staff successfully completing fitness test



5.8%

Working time lost to staff sickness across all groups



100%

Compliant spend as a % of overall spend



>> OUR PERFORMANCE

To monitor performance and ensure we are working towards our Annual Objectives and Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) commitments, several performance measures were agreed upon by the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the Annual Plan 2021-2022.

These measures monitor the delivery of our statutory obligations and services we provide alongside how key resources are managed, including staff, finance, and health and safety. However, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted some of our performance measures and plans.

Performance is monitored quarterly by the Strategic Performance Board and the Audit and Governance Committee. Our year-end performance against our Corporate Measures can be seen on pages 44-46.

Our strategy to prevent fires and other emergencies includes providing Safe and Well Visits to those at heightened risk of dying or being injured as a result of an accidental dwelling fire. Although we had to take a risk-based approach during the pandemic, we increased the number of Safe and Well Visits as restrictions eased. This year we have delivered 5,887 Safe and Well Visits, and we have now completed over 37,000 Safe and Well visits since April 2017.

In 2021-22, we continued to work closely with our local authority partners to ensure vulnerable members of our communities



were protected and supported. Providing this support was more important than ever due to the impacts of the pandemic on domestic violence, and mental health and substance and alcohol misuse. We made 566 safeguarding referrals this year, an increase of 18% from the previous year, 100% of which we made within our 24-hour target.

Fire Safety Inspectors completed 957 full Fire Safety Audits in premises falling under the Regulatory Reform Order 2005, which outlines our duty to enforce fire safety in non-domestic premises. As a result, this is an increase compared to the previous year as our activity returned to normal after the pandemic.



>> OUR PERFORMANCE




Over 37,000
Safe and Well Visits delivered since April 2017

In 2021-22, there were 7,300 emergency incidents within Berkshire, which is a return to the level of incidents seen before the pandemic.

While the number of Primary Fires has remained relatively steady since 2019/20, we have seen a 77% increase in Primary Fires in Industrial and Commercial buildings in 2021-22, which is consistent with businesses reopening as COVID-19 restrictions eased.

Secondary Fires also fell by 22% in 2021-22 compared to the previous year. Although this fall is partly a result of a wet summer, 2020-21 figures were higher than usual due to increased rubbish and refuse fires when local amenity sites were closed during the first COVID-19 lockdown.

False Alarms rose by 9% in 2021-22 compared to the previous year, including an 18% increase in Automatic Fire Alarms compared to 2020-21, which is again consistent with businesses reopening as COVID-19 pandemic restrictions eased. This year the Service carried out



566
Safeguarding referrals made during 2021/22

a consultation addressing the burden of Automatic Fire Alarms, further details of which are on page 21.

While the number of road traffic collisions increased by 18% on the previous year due to busier roads as pandemic restrictions eased, the number still remained lower than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Though we were fortunate to have only seen a relatively small number of COVID-19 cases amongst our staff, these and requirements to self-isolate, impacted the availability of our wholtime crews, which this year was 87.0%, compared with 96.8% in 2020-21. In response, we utilised some of our on-call staff to support our wholtime crew availability during this challenging time. However, this also impacted on-call staff availability which was 43.6% compared with 65.6% the year before.

Despite these challenges, we exceeded our Response Standard target in 2021-22 of attending 75% of all emergency



incidents in under 10 minutes from the time of the call. Our overall performance for the year was 77.2%. Our performance was consistent across the year, with the target achieved every month.

Our performance measures and targets enable us to manage our performance and demonstrate our effectiveness at preventing and protecting against risk and responding to incidents to ensure that we provide value for money to the communities we serve.

Audits

A number of internal audits were conducted in 2021-22:

- Cyber Essentials;
- Performance Management;
- Value for Money;
- Vetting and pre-employment checks;
- Risk Management and Governance;
- Firefighter Pension Administration;
- Payroll Provider; and
- Key Financial Controls.

We await the results of our Cyber Essentials internal audit.

Our auditors found substantial assurance on four of seven audit reports received and reasonable assurance on the final three of the seven audit reports received.

We monitor all audit actions through the Strategic Performance Board and Audit and Governance Committee.

Statement of Assurance

The annual Statement of Assurance formally confirms to the Government, stakeholders, and the communities we serve the adequacy of arrangements for the effective management of financial, governance, and operational matters in our Service.

The Statement confirms the extent to which we have met the requirement of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

The Service continued to work on projects to deliver against the Areas for Improvement identified in our previous inspections, which have rated the Service as 'Good' overall.

HMICFRS will carry out a new inspection in June 2022.





>> ENSURING A SWIFT AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE

In the [Corporate Plan and IRMP 2019 – 2023](#), one of the Fire Authority’s Strategic Commitments is to ensure a swift and effective response when called to emergencies.

Maintaining Crewing During the COVID-19 Pandemic

To ensure our Service provides a swift and effective response to residents, we have set three Response Measures which are reported on a quarterly basis. In an emergency incident, a swift response is vital to ensuring that we can help those in need. Therefore, we measure the percentage of occasions where the first fire engine arrives at an emergency incident within 10 minutes, from time the emergency call was answered.

As a Service we aim to have a fire engine on scene within 10 minutes on 75% of occasions. During 2021-2022, we have exceeded this target, responding within 10 minutes on 77.2% of occasions.

This target has been achieved despite of significant pressures on the workforce caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the legal requirement to self-isolate was removed on 24 February

2021, staff continue to be advised to isolate if they are unwell with COVID-19 symptoms, for their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of colleagues.

Crewing levels are also measured and reported on - both for wholtime and on-call frontline pumping appliances. With workforce sickness and absence high, this has impacted the number of shifts where there is adequate crewing on all of our appliances.

To manage this, frequent meetings of the Critical Event Management Team (CEMT) and Response Support Group take place, monitoring sickness levels across the organisation in an effort to maintain adequate operational crewing levels.

To provide additional resilience to our wholtime appliances’ availability, a number of our on-call staff have transferred into wholtime roles at our stations. A total of nine on-call firefighters completed the transfer. This increased wholtime appliance availability and provided them with an opportunity to gain more experience, but reduced on-call availability during the past year.

During a challenging twelve months, the arrangements put in place helped ensure that residents continued to receive a swift and effective response at their time of need.



77.2%

Percentage of occasions where the first fire engine arrived at an incident within 10 minutes



Maintaining Our Emergency Call Handling Services During Storm Eunice

Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) is a shared function for emergency call handling, mobilising, and resource management, which takes emergency calls for the Thames Valley area, including the counties of Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Royal Berkshire. TVFCS has been in operation for over seven years, taking more than 238,437 calls (until 31 March 2022).

During 2021-2022, TVFCS again faced staffing challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Safety measures remained in place to protect the wellbeing of staff and maintain this critical function.

The resilience of TVFCS was tested on several occasions, including the arrival of Storm Eunice in Royal Berkshire on 18 February. Between midnight and 5pm on Friday, 18 February, TVFCS staff answered more than 400 calls in the Thames Valley. Many calls concerned fallen trees causing threats to life and structural damage to properties. Our teams worked diligently to prioritise those in greatest need, where there was a risk to life. In this period of high demand, the emergency phone lines needed to remain open for residents to dial 999 for assistance.

In the lead-up to and during Storm Eunice, our Duty Officers and Communications Team worked collectively to share regular updates on the RBFRS website and social media channels and proactively issued them to local media.



Today they’re out responding to our community calls in storm Eunice.

What amazing “Heroes” we have in our County assisting us when we’re in need, keeping us safe.

Twitter User



Crucial safety advice shared helped residents to prepare ahead of Storm Eunice. Advice included securing all loose belongings down and only making essential journeys. Residents were also provided with contact information for reporting road debris and advised to follow local weather forecasts.

Despite Storm Eunice causing extensive disruption and damage, residents continued to receive a swift and effective response when dialling 999.



400

Calls answered by Thames Valley Fire Control Service during Storm Eunice



Working in Partnership at a Difficult Incident

Our Service worked closely with Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service, and Reading Borough Council in responding to a devastating fire at a block of flats in Rowe Court, Reading.

In the early hours of Wednesday, 15 December, our teams responded to this fire in the four-storey building, arriving within 8 minutes of receiving the 999 call. Upon arrival, they faced a challenging situation.

Their priority was to locate casualties inside the building to evacuate them safely and ensure they received prompt treatment from our partners at South Central Ambulance Service while also working to extinguish the fire.

During this incident, our firefighters were able to rescue one of the residents from the building using a ladder, and emergency call handlers also led a resident safely out of the property by providing fire survival guidance. However, despite their efforts on the scene, we know that two people, Richard Burgess and Neil Morris, tragically lost their lives.

At the height of the fire, there were around 50 firefighters at the scene from stations across Berkshire and Oxfordshire, supported by Officers and specialist equipment, including our Aerial Ladder Platform and the Urban Search and Rescue Team from Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The fire caused extensive damage to the structure of the building, meaning recovery efforts had to be delayed until scaffolding installed could ensure the safety of staff on-site. In the meantime, our staff went to offer Safe and Well Visits in the nearby area to provide safety advice to local residents and regularly provide information.

It was vital that throughout the incident, we shared updates promptly, and the media reporting was accurate. A dedicated website page was set up, updates were posted on partner agencies' social media channels and interviews were held, including a joint press briefing on the first day of the incident. These steps helped warn and inform our communities of the incident and reassured them about what was being done to keep them safe.

Our thoughts continue to be with those affected by this tragic fire. We recognise that this incident is very distressing, especially for the family and friends of those that lost their lives. Following the incident, the Service offered all staff support through its dedicated Employee Assistance Programme, through which they continue to be supported.



>> REDUCING THE BURDEN OF FALSE ALARMS



Between 17 January and 28 March, Our Service ran an extensive consultation on behalf of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority regarding how our Service should respond to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs).

An AFA is an alarm that, when it sounds, will alert the occupants of the building. Building occupiers should consider ways to reduce the number of AFAs and have a legal responsibility in line with their fire safety measures on-site to respond promptly when an AFA sounds.

The Automatic Fire Alarm consultation asked residents, business owners, and people who work in Berkshire to consider how their Fire and Rescue Service should respond to AFAs in lower-risk, occupied buildings. Lower-risk, occupied buildings include shops, factories, and office blocks.

The consultation document was available online in English, Polish, Urdu, and Punjabi. Accessible and Easyread versions of the consultation document aimed to make the consultation as inclusive as possible. The public was able to respond online or via mail.

The public indicated, through the consultation, that they favoured the proposed changes to how the Service responds to AFAs in lower-risk buildings. On Thursday, 28 April, the Fire Authority approved the proposed changes.

The Service consulted on how it should respond to AFAs because 99% of these calls are false alarms, placing a significant burden on the Service.

The difference between the new process and the old process is the removal of the second call back after 20 minutes. Removing the second call back is low risk, because the responsible person at the property will be required to do the necessary checks and confirm if there is a fire.

Under the changes made by the Service, up to 1,300 hours of firefighter time could be saved annually, allowing firefighters to dedicate more time to training, visiting high-risk properties, and delivering vital fire safety advice to communities across Berkshire.

Not included in the consultation were higher-risk buildings, such as care homes, hotels, high-rise buildings, and houses, and the Service's policy towards AFAs on these premises has not changed.

For further information on the Automatic Fire Alarm consultation, [please visit our website](#).



>> FOCUS ON FIRE SAFETY

One of the Fire Authority's Strategic Commitments in the [Fire Authority's Corporate Plan and IRMP 2019 – 2023](#) is to ensure we provide advice, consultation and enforcement in relation to fire safety standards in buildings.

Fire Safety in the Built Environment

With the Grenfell Tower Inquiry continuing to examine the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the fire on the night of 14 June 2017, our Service has been following proceedings closely to ensure we continue to put the safety of Berkshire residents at the heart of everything we do.

In Phase 2, the Public Inquiry is examining the causes of the events, including how Grenfell Tower came to be in a condition that allowed the fire to spread in the way it did.

In previous Annual Reports, we have outlined our own four-phase plan firstly for responding to the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, and then learning from and responding to the emergent picture of risk associated with high-rise buildings and Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding.

In Phase 1, our Service inspected high-rise buildings and gave 4,700 residents valuable fire safety guidance. In Phase 2, we worked with building owners, Local Authorities, and residents to ensure compliance with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) guidance and interim measures.

The Built Environment Programme (BEP) was established as part of phase 3 of our response. To manage the scale and



complexity of change, we have arranged the Programme into five work streams: tactics and equipment, call management, risk and information, command support, and our high-rise residential building (HRRB) project.

Each of the 46 recommendations have been translated into risks using the organisational risk management approach. This has allowed us to address both the specific recommendations and underlying issues where appropriate. Where areas of improvement have been identified, the Programme has established new ways of working whilst providing assurance that changes are embedded into the Service and making a real difference to the safety of staff and residents through improved



effectiveness of the services we deliver across the built environment.

The Programme has made significant progress towards addressing the 46 recommendations, including:

- The introduction of escape hoods;
- Assuring our accessibility of Thames Valley Police's helicopter footage;
- Conducting radio tests in high-risk buildings to identify any potential issues and making boosters available where needed; and
- Implementing a new process for sharing critical risk information between Response and Resilience and TVFCS to ensure everyone has the most up-to-date information during an incident.

Electronic Premise information plates (EPIPs) have been developed for all high-rise residential buildings across the County. An EPIP is a simple 'one page' overview of key operational risk information, which is available to crews on the Mobile Data Terminals. EPIPs support tactical planning by enabling crews to access crucial information about a building during the early stages of an incident, which ultimately helps to keep our crews safe.

A number of training packages have been released on our Learning Management System, to equip our staff with a greater level of knowledge and understanding that will better prepare them for future incidents in high-rise buildings. Our Services' External Cladding Systems

e-learning course has been published on the shared learning platform for fire & rescue service staff, FRS learn.

During phase 1 of the HRRB project, the team visited 187 buildings. This provided the service with a clear understanding of the risks associated with these premises and enabled us to ensure appropriate regulatory activities were in place.

We have now moved into Phase 2 of the project whereby we continue to work closely with Building Owners and Responsible Persons, alongside our partners in local authority housing teams ensuring where necessary, enforcement action is taken and interim measures are applied as appropriate. We have identified 97 buildings as needing further management due to cladding, internal compartmentation, or other fire safety concerns and continue to have our dedicated teamwork to ensure these risks are managed appropriately.

We are committed to learning the lessons from the findings of the Inquiry and our thoughts remain firmly focused on the victims, families, and communities devastated by the Grenfell fire.



97

Buildings identified as needing further management



Fire Safety Activities

A total of 947 Fire Safety Audits have been completed and enforcement activity has continued to ensure that business owners comply with fire safety legislation.

We work with business owners to support, promote and ensure fire safety standards on premises. If the fire safety is not adequate then this will be addressed, usually through a notice of deficiencies, but if this is not complied with or is so serious it needs immediate attention then we will use our enforcement powers and consider prosecution.

In addition to audits carried out in response to complaints or after an incident, we conduct Audits in premises that we identify to be high-risk through our Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP).

This year, in line with our Protection Strategy, we have conducted a full review of how we define high risk and what data sources we use to decide which premises we need to visit. The new Risk Based Inspection Programme will launch in April 2022.

A total of 36 Enforcement Notices have been issued during the past year, under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. These are notices served against business premises to require them to meet adequate fire safety standards. This is an increase of 63.4% from 2020-21.

This last year we have received 35 building consultations, which required a fire engineering input. A number of these are extended consultations with the Building Control Body as a result of our initial comments to improve the safety of the premises for occupants and access for firefighters. Due to the demand of engineered consultations coming into the Service, we are exploring introducing fire engineering apprenticeships to develop others and provide more resilience to our services.

Our Service's Fire Engineering Lead has also been involved in the NFCC FETS (Fire Engineering Technical Standards) Group and has input into the Mega Warehouse working group to influence the FRS National approach to consultations of this type. Furthermore, our Fire Engineering Lead took the lead on a development of a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths) day at a local girls' school to raise awareness of different careers in the fire service, and to introduce fire safety and human behaviours to the students.

The majority of businesses comply with fire safety legislation and our Service will always seek to work with business owners to maintain fire safety standards on premises with prosecution considered as



36

Enforcement Notices issued in the past year, an increase of 63.4% from 2020-21



a last resort. However, if our residents are put at risk, we won't hesitate to prosecute. We have successfully prosecuted one leaseholder in the past year.

On 23 November 2021, the leaseholder of a flat in Reading was sentenced to community service for a number of fire safety breaches. Reading Crown Court sentenced the defendant to 200 hours of unpaid community service and the Authority was awarded full prosecution costs.

In line with the new Protection Fire Standard published last year, our Service has been working hard to further align our Protection function with the NFCC Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators. Part of this work has resulted in the design and implementation of a new Development Assessment Pathway (DAPs) for fire safety staff. Our Service has also adopted the nationally recognised title of Fire Safety Inspectors (FSIs) to describe our Inspecting Officers. It is vital that we continue to ensure that our Fire Safety Regulators can demonstrate the highest levels of professional competence. The implementation of a new Development Assessment Pathway for Fire Safety Inspectors aligned with the NFCC Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators is an important factor in achieving this aim.

DAPs is in three parts as below, with different booklets depending on the level of fire safety experienced required. Booklet Two is fully implemented with eight FSIs working through them with a

completion estimated for the end of the year. Booklet Three is the next one being implemented that will see five protection managers through developing competency for the role and the aim is to get this in place by autumn. Booklet One will be the last of the three to implement, although the structure for this has commenced.

- Booklet One – Fire Safety Advisors (Grade 3)
- Booklet Two – Fire Safety Inspectors (Grade 4/5)
- Booklet Three – Fire Safety Competent Manager (Grade 6)

Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance Programme has been designed and implemented, to provide an understanding our levels of consistency and standards within our Protection work, which will allow further analysis for decisions and actions to consider around learning and improving our processes.

This programme has commenced and will sample areas of work across all to provide findings for the Internal Peer Review Group (IPRG). The IPRG will review findings to provide an agreed summary of actions and decisions required for further governance at the Prevention and Protection Support Group. Over the year, this programme has collated observations from all hubs and across all protection activities, the IPRG has also built in an evaluation process to review the Quality Assurance process to ensure it works well and if any changes are required moving forward.



>> PROMOTING COMMUNITY SAFETY

In the [Corporate Plan and IRMP 2019 – 2023](#), one of the Fire Authority's Strategic Commitments is that we will provide education and advice on how to prevent fires and other emergencies.

Water Safety

Our Service embarked on several Water Safety initiatives throughout 2021/22.

In April 2021, we supported the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) annual Water Safety Week. Taking place between 26 April and 2 May, the campaign aims to raise awareness of the risk of accidental drowning and share advice so that people can enjoy the water safely.

Drowning is among the leading causes of accidental death in the UK. In 2021, 277 people tragically died in accidental drownings and 44% of those people had no intention of ever being in the water.

As in previous years, we marked Water Safety Week on all of our social media accounts, The Service received positive engagement with a total reach of 40,602 on Twitter.

We also supported the NFCC's Drowning Prevention Week in June 2021. Digitally, the Service had a total reach of 11,680 on Facebook and a total reach of 1,698 on Instagram.



Stations also placed posters around the local area in key locations, such as the Jubilee River in Slough, the Sounding Arch in Maidenhead, and other hot spots, where people may be tempted to enter the water.

As part of the week-long campaign, we also teamed up with unitary authorities and local radio stations to share messaging with residents as well as partners. Our teams joined Thames Valley Police (TVP) and South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) to promote the 'Don't Drink and Drown' campaign, run by the Royal Life Saving Society, which encouraged smart decision-making if drinking alcohol around open water.

Adults at Risk Programme

The Adults at Risk Programme (ARP) is a free training scheme run by the Prevention Team to provide a fire safety guide for all those involved in the care of adults in the community. The ARP lays down the minimum recommendations for the protection of adults most at risk from fire.



53,980
Reach across social media channels during water safety initiatives



It is recognised that there are many considerations to be taken into account when planning a care package to allow someone to continue to live in the community with extra support to ensure their safety and wellbeing. If fire safety is not considered and the correct protection measures are not put in place then the person may not be safe in their home. They will be at the greatest possible risk should a fire occur.

As part of the partnership approach being adopted, we have partnered with Adult Social Care to supply training and resources to support agency partners, families, and carers. This training package is designed to enable participants to work with our teams to protect vulnerable adults living in the community from the risks of fire.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ARP training sessions have been delivered remotely with participants booking onto the courses via our Eventbrite page.

West Berkshire Hotel Refugee Event

Since August 2021, refugees have been arriving in the UK from Afghanistan through the Afghan Refugee Resettlement Programme. Around 20,000 refugees are expected to arrive in the UK through this scheme over the next four years, and when they arrive in the UK they are placed in hotels until permanent housing becomes available. As the fire service in Afghanistan is very different from that in the UK, we need to ensure that they are aware of how our service works and how they can prevent the risk of fire, and what to do if a fire breaks out.

We were contacted by a local hotel in Reading, as they were concerned that when conducting a fire drill, many of the refugees did not know what they needed to do to evacuate the building.

To support the refugees, our Prevention Team gathered information from the hotel, the local authority, and the Reading Refugee Support Group to create an information package for the refugees.

Our Prevention Teams held two events at a hotel in West Berkshire, with the first taking place on 17 March. This event focused on fire safety and included information about the fire service and calling 999, escape and evacuation as well as fire safety prevention. The second event is planned to cover road and water safety.

The team also worked with other fire and rescue services to develop materials that could be used elsewhere across Berkshire.

This work will help us to share important safety information which will help to prevent fires in hotels that are participating in the refugee resettlement programme.

In developing this project, the team considered the specific needs of the refugees and consulted with experts and people from the Afghan community to develop activities and information that is tailored to their specific needs.

The first event was very well attended. Over 30 adults attended a fire safety presentation that covered fire safety in the context of living in a hotel.



The Prevention Team delivered the presentation to two groups. One group of 16 men and the second group of 15 women, with two women translating into Dari and Pashto.

Outside, approximately 50 – 60 children watched a water demonstration from our crews, who were impressed by the appliance and the equipment.

When we finished the women’s fire safety presentation, a male hub manager delivered the presentation to approximately 16 men.

This approach worked as the women preferred to attend the presentation separately and ask questions and discuss topics afterwards.



31

Adults attended a fire safety presentation which covered fire safety in the context of living in a hotel



50-60

Children took part in the hotel Refugee Event

Biker Down

Motorcyclists are a highly vulnerable group of road users and although they make up a significantly low amount of motor vehicle traffic on UK roads, they have a high fatality and casualty rate.

Biker Down is a free training course aimed at motorcyclists of all ages and experiences. The course is run by most fire and rescue services in the UK and is aimed at preparing motorcyclists should the worst happen on the roads.

On 15 January, we hosted our first Thames Valley Biker Down course at Newsham Court with the Thames Valley Harley Owners Group (TVHOG). The session received some great feedback from those taking part. Mike Connolly, TVHOG Safety Officer, said: “We were extremely pleased and grateful to you for hosting our group as one of the first Biker Down sessions of 2022.

“Your team delivered an excellent training morning that was entertaining, as well as highly educational and memorable. All of our riders who attended have told me that they feel much more confident in their ability to plan and lead rides and deal with any incidents more competently. The knowledge and experience of your training team were highly evident.”

The second Thames Valley Biker Down session was run on 12 February, again at Newsham Court, with the Rapid Training group. Neil Whiteman, a Biker Down Instructor and Safety Education Coordinator at RBFRS, said: “The two sessions have been great. The feedback



and engagement during the sessions have been very positive. People who have done this course before picked up on new things and others found it useful to refresh their knowledge for the coming year when out on the roads again. We do feel proud to represent RBFRS when giving training to such a high-risk group of road users.”

In the future, the Service will continue to show our commitment to motorcycle safety by delivering more Thames Valley Biker Down courses and also providing a location for the ‘Be A Better Biker’ course, now running in Berkshire for the first time.



Fire Cadets

Fire Cadets is a youth initiative run by firefighters, with educational support from our Prevention Department. Working as a team, Fire Cadets take part in practical and theoretical fire service activities, including hose drills, breathing apparatus procedures, and fire safety awareness sessions.

The scheme also teaches young people essential life skills such as self-discipline, confidence, and leadership. The courses are held at Crowthorne, Whitley Wood,

Newbury, and Maidenhead Fire Stations. However, more stations are looking at launching Fire Cadets in the near future.

In July 2021, 28 Fire Cadets from all four stations showed off their new skills at a Graduation Ceremony held at Whitley Wood Training Centre. During the Graduation Ceremony, each unit showcased the skills they had learnt, by performing graduation drills, which involved scenarios such as vehicle and domestic ‘fires’.

Feedback from the graduating cohort was very positive, with the Cadets commenting that they really enjoyed the challenging nature of the programme despite the challenging circumstances, with every week encouraging different skills such as teamwork and fire safety skills.

The course typically runs for 36 weeks during term time, although Cadets have also learnt and participated virtually in line with COVID-19 measures.





>> PRIORITISING HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

In our [People Strategy](#), we set out our objective to support both the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our staff. During 2021-2022, we progressed a number of areas dedicated to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff.

Return to Work Fitness Tests

For much of 2021, COVID-19 was still at the forefront of our health and wellbeing activities. Protecting the health, safety, and wellbeing of our staff continued to be of the highest priority.

We provided increased support to staff, including mental health and financial wellbeing support, as well as flexible working arrangements. However, one of the most significant developments implemented was extending return to work fitness testing.

As evidence emerged about the potential long-term effects of COVID-19, we identified the need to assess the fitness of operational staff before they returned to duty following a COVID-19 positive test.

A return to work test with pre and post-test pulse oximetry was introduced and adapted throughout 2021. Pulse oximetry is a simple, relatively cheap and

non-invasive technique to monitor blood oxygenation. The purpose of a return to work test is to identify individuals with ongoing issues needing further support.

Allowing staff to return to work with no fitness assessment could leave them at risk of becoming unwell on duty. A return to work test ensures the safety of the individual, the colleagues who rely on their fitness and limits the delay in returning individuals to operational duties, allowing our Service to continue to provide a swift and effective response to emergencies across Berkshire.

The safety of staff was maintained despite the unprecedented pressures on crewing, and the success of return to work testing has integrated testing into business as usual, with return to work testing mainstreamed for all respiratory absences.

Disability Awareness Network

Alongside implementing return to work fitness testing, we continued to provide mental health and wellbeing support to our staff.

Introduced in early 2021, the Disability Awareness Network is still running. The Network aims to provide support, and raise awareness for anyone who has, knows someone, or cares for someone who has a long-term health condition or disability.



Return to work fitness testing is part of business as usual for all respiratory absences




The Disability Awareness Network provided support on autism, dementia, alzheimers, dyslexia, diabetes, and low mood

The group meets monthly to discuss a wide range of disability-focused topics and provides the opportunity for staff to gain advice and support from colleagues across the Service.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, the Network covered autism, movement, dementia and Alzheimer's, dyslexia, diabetes, and sources of support. The Network has also hosted guest speakers, including a speaker from the Disability Forum and a speaker from Benenden.

Mental Health Support

Each quarter, our employee assistance provider sends the Service anonymised information, including the number of calls into the 24/7 telephone helpline and the primary reason for the call. RBFRS monitors this information, and initiatives are implemented to support staff where trends are identified.

Over the last 12 months, 24 calls were made relating directly to low mood. This is the second most common reason that staff used the helpline.

In response, we provided specific advice and activities to assist staff in coping with these feelings. This included teaching



Six new Trauma Support Volunteers joined the Trauma Support Group and 10 trauma support sessions were hosted

staff massage techniques proven to help with low mood, a dedicated Disability Awareness Network session, and providing guidance documents at particular times of the year, such as Christmas and New Year and in line with changes in the pandemic. Staff were regularly reminded of the other support avenues that our Service offers, including its dedicated Health and Safety Team, Wellbeing Manager, Blue Light Champions, and Occupational Health.

Trauma Support Volunteers

We also have a Trauma Support Group available to staff intended to minimise the distress that can occur after traumatic incidents.

The Trauma Support Group consists of trained staff volunteers who can provide psychological first aid to help individuals develop coping methods within a few days of an incident.

Six staff members recently trained to join the Trauma Support Group, giving the group 15 volunteers in total. In the last 12 months, the Trauma Support Group has delivered ten support sessions to staff in need.



>> MODERNISING OUR SERVICE

In our [Strategic Asset Investment Framework](#), the Fire Authority has set out how we will maintain and renew our vital capital assets. This is supported by the more detailed Property Asset Management Strategy and Fleet Strategy, which provide a high level statement on the overall approach to providing property, fleet and equipment to meet the needs of the Service. Our collaboration work through the sharing of facilities is important in enabling us to provide the best possible service to the people of Royal Berkshire.

New Aerial Ladder Platform

We improved our fleet with the addition of a new Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP). Standing at a maximum height of 45 meters, this impressive new addition has enhanced the Service’s operational capabilities when tackling incidents in high-rise environments.

The new aerial appliance offers increased outreach at incidents, allowing the vehicle to reach incidents in taller buildings. Importantly, it enables extra horizontal reach, which will allow firefighters to access more difficult to reach areas.

Wayne Bowcock, Chief Fire Officer, said: “To maintain a modern fire and rescue service, it is important that we provide fit-for-purpose, 21st-century operational equipment to support our firefighters in the delivery of excellent services to the communities we serve.

“This gives our residents the reassurance and confidence that we have the equipment and professional skill to respond quickly and highly effectively.”

The new Aerial Ladder Platform is a Bronto Skylift 45XR that was built by Angloco on a Volvo chassis. It forms part of a programme to update the Service’s fleet with state-of-the-art vehicles, incorporating the latest technology.



The new appliance was also accompanied by a new rangefinder and lightning detector. These tools will help keep crews safe and provide additional support during operations in adverse or hazardous conditions.

The deployment of this new vehicle was made possible thanks to investments made by Royal Berkshire Fire Authority under its Strategic Asset Investment Framework.

New Appliances

A further four new fire engines were deployed at Bracknell, Ascot and, Wokingham Road Fire Stations and the vehicle at Langley Fire Station was replaced.



The new appliances formed a part of a joint procurement process project between RBFRS, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Services.

The addition of these four new fire engines means that all wholtime fire stations in Berkshire now have a Volvo fire engine to serve their local communities.

As previously, the fire engines were purchased as part of the Fire Authority’s Strategic Asset Investment Framework, which sets out how the Authority will maintain and renew the vital capital assets necessary to support the services delivered by RBFRS.

Councillor Colin Dudley, Chairman of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, said: “One of the Fire Authority’s Strategic Commitments is to ensure a swift and effective response when called to emergencies. As part of our Strategic Asset Investment Framework, we continue to invest in vital assets that benefit the community. The Fire Authority

has prioritised investing in frontline fire appliances, recognising the importance of providing fit for purpose equipment to support the services provided by a modern fire and rescue service to the communities of Royal Berkshire.”

The Volvo fire engine previously based at Langley Fire Station has also been replaced and the previous vehicle is now in use at Newsham Court for driver training and firefighter development.

The deployment of the appliance at Newsham Court provides improved training opportunities for firefighters whilst also offering immediate resilience in the event of a large-scale incident.



To maintain a modern fire and rescue service, it is important that we provide fit-for-purpose, 21st century operational equipment to support our firefighters in the delivery excellent services to the communities we serve.



Wayne Bowcock, Chief Fire Officer

45
Meters
Maximum height of the new
Aerial Ladder Platform



Breathing Apparatus Project

Our Service, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire have been collaborating on a joint procurement process to purchase the same Breathing Apparatus (BA) set along with all associated equipment and train staff in their use. Through this project it is hoped that our Services will maximise the efficient mobilisation of resources and improve the way we work together at the incident ground.

Following a robust procurement process, including practical trials in July, Interspiro Ltd was selected to provide BA equipment for fire and rescue services in the Thames Valley.

Interspiro was one of three suppliers who provided equipment for the trial last summer – which was carried out by three candidates from all of the Thames Valley fire and rescue services.

The selected candidates undertook a training day at Marlow Fire Station. The trials were supported by Training Instructors from each Service who devised and facilitated the scenarios used to test the equipment. This was also overseen by other members of the project team, including Fire Brigade Union (FBU) representation.

During the trials, feedback from the candidates was fed back to Interspiro to see if further improvements could be made. Following the procurement process, our crews are being trained and will begin using the new equipment operationally from November 2022.

The rollout process has seen the introduction of the Incurve-E SCBA BA set, utilising a 300-bar cylinder with telemetry-enabled entry control boards (ECBs) to monitor wearer progress and welfare.

A full training and rollout programme is currently in process and is being delivered by a tri-service training team.

The completion of this project will mean that all BA wearers across the Thames Valley will be using the same equipment to be committed through the same ECBs at cross-border incidents.

This will further enable all benefits that come with improved Operational Alignment including firefighter safety.

3
Suppliers
Were chosen to take part in the procurement process for the Breathing Apparatus Project at Marlow Fire Station

9
Candidates
Partook in the procurement process with three representing each of the Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services



Celebrating the Official Opening of Crowthorne Community Fire Station

Our Service celebrated the official opening of Crowthorne Community Fire Station on Friday, 15 October 2021.

Crowthorne Community Fire Station is our second tri-service community fire station. As such, it offers a shared location for our Service, Thames Valley Police, and South Central Ambulance Service.

Construction began in May 2019 and took 11 months to complete. During the build, Crowthorne’s on-call firefighters were able to respond from a base at Wellington College, before beginning to respond operationally from the new Community Fire Station in May 2020.

Councillor Angus Ross, the Lead Member for Strategic Assets, said: “Our thanks go to all involved for working tirelessly, under very difficult circumstances to complete this essential operational base for the three blue light services - Fire, Police, and Ambulance. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and under very difficult circumstances, I am very

pleased to say that the Station has been completed on time and on budget.

“The rebuild of Crowthorne Community Fire Station is part of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority’s plans to modernise the fire and rescue service’s buildings over the next 15 years, providing suitable, fit for purpose, community-based fire stations across the County of Berkshire.”

The official opening provided the opportunity for a number of partners and dignitaries to speak to Crowthorne’s on-call firefighters and take a tour of the Community Fire Station.

Councillor Colin Dudley, Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, officially opened the station as part of the ceremony. Speaking of the event, he said: “I was delighted to officially open Crowthorne Community Fire Station.

“While the firefighters began responding from the new station in May 2020, the official opening had been delayed due to the pandemic, so we are delighted that we have now been able to officially open the station”.

11
Months
Construction time of Crowthorne Community Fire Station, which was ahead of schedule



Theale Community Fire Station Now Responding to Emergencies

Since October 2021, firefighters have been serving the community from Theale Community Fire Station, after successfully relocating from Dee Road Fire Station in Tilehurst.

The relocation has been made possible thanks to a team effort involving staff from across the Service, led by the Capital Projects Team, who have worked effectively with the contractors on site. Contractors Knights Brown began the build in January 2020.

This new station supports our ongoing commitment to working collaboratively with our emergency service partners, offering a shared location for our Service Thames Valley Police, and South Central Ambulance Service.

As well as improvements for all Services in the efficient use of public funds, the relationships and opportunities of working more closely together are expected to support greater collective effectiveness for the services we provide to the public.

Councillor Colin Dudley, Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, said: "Theale Community Fire Station is a fantastic investment that the local community will be proud of.

"The construction of this community fire station will help to deliver on our strategic commitment to ensure that our fire stations, people, and resources are placed firmly at the heart of the local communities they are serving.



"I am sure that the new station will be a facility that the community will be proud of for many years to come."

We intend to welcome local residents to see the new facility, with the official opening ceremony planned to take place in summer 2022.



Theale Community Fire Station is a fantastic investment that the local community will be proud of.

The construction of this community fire station will help to deliver on our strategic commitment to ensure that our fire stations, people and resources are placed firmly at the heart of local communities they are serving.



Councillor Colin Dudley, Chairman, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority



>> FIREFIGHTER APPRENTICES



For the first time, we recruited Apprentices into the crucial firefighter role. As per previous firefighter recruitment, anyone, from any background or walk of life could apply to be a Firefighter Apprentice, but this time they had to be new to the role.

We received 418 completed applications. After a long and challenging recruitment process, the class of 18 new Apprentices was selected to begin training towards becoming wholtime firefighters. The Service commissioned an external provider, the Fire Service College (Capita), to train and develop this new group of staff. Capita is approved to deliver the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship through the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP).

The course enabled the Apprentices to get to know each other, form friendships, and further build on the foundations of teamwork, commitment, loyalty, integrity, and professionalism, aligned to our Behavioural Competency Framework.

The Apprentices were thoroughly tested with a range of practical and theoretical training, core skills, breathing apparatus,

fire behaviour, water rescue, and road traffic collision training.

Upon completion of the course, the Apprentices returned to our Training Centre for a further five weeks with Instructors to help integrate them into our Service's ways of working. This included specific operational training on our equipment, safeguarding training, organisational awareness training, and a host of realistic scenarios to put what they had learnt into practice in a safe environment.

The Apprentices have now taken up their station placements across the county. Their development will continue with the support of their line manager, with an apprenticeship talent coach, supported by the Service. It is anticipated the Apprenticeships will be completed within 24 months from the start date.

418
Applications to be an Apprentice Firefighter



>> EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI)

The Fire and Rescue Sector is characterised by a disproportionately low number of women and people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Our Service’s EDI initiatives aim to help remedy this whilst also helping to connect the Service to the many diverse communities of Berkshire. This work also has also allowed the Service to tailor itself to the different needs of Berkshire’s communities, whilst creating a workplace where everyone feels valued and able to be themselves. Consequently, the Service recognise that being an open and inclusive Service will ultimately make it more effective.

New EDI Objectives

In line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in the Equality Act 2010, we encouraged as many people as possible to have their say on our four revised EDI Objectives.

The first objective was to increase the diversity of staff at all levels, recognising the value of a diverse workforce. The second was leadership and corporate commitment to support our organisational leaders to understand their role in tackling inequalities and demonstrate inclusive behaviours.

The third objective was focused on improving service delivery by creating strong links with different communities across Berkshire. The final objective emphasised growing an inclusive culture of equality and diversity in the Service.

Based on the results of the consultation, the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority unanimously agreed to approve all four EDI objectives that will be in place for the next four years.

Equality Impact Statements

In light of various developments in this area nationally, including the work of the

National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), a review of RBFRS’ overall approach to Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) was conducted. Following this, the Service identified a need to update and revise its EIA process.

A review of completed EIAs found that the existing approach to EIAs was inconsistent and lacked clear understanding across RBFRS. As a result, EIAs were completed inconsistently or often retrospectively and therefore failed to inform the Service’s work as effectively as possible.

Following this review of EIAs and external developments such as the work of the NFCC, several steps to improve this process were identified. These included a review and update of the EIA form template and the production of a comprehensive guidance document to assist staff in completing the template.

Additionally, to ensure that EIAs are completed more proactively and consistently across the Service, changes to other document templates were made to reiterate the requirement for an EIA where relevant and to ensure they became embedded in these processes.



These changes will impact the design and delivery of the Service’s work for the benefit of all staff and members of our community. Therefore, staff will be better able to identify and reduce any negative or disproportionate impacts resulting from work conducted by the Service. Our Service’s activities will now also be tailored to the impacted groups.

Armed Force’s Veterans’ Hubs

We were happy to hold the first in-person Armed Forces Veterans’ Hub at Crowthorne Community Fire Station on Wednesday, 17 November. The Armed Forces Veterans’ Hub initiative was launched in 2020 to connect veterans and support organisations.

Che Scott, Station Manager, said: “The Veterans’ Hub Initiative is a way we can further support the armed forces community in Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. How we do that is by inviting them into our fire stations, making sure that our fire stations remain at the heart of our community, and ensure that we provide a safe space for them to get some help and advice.”

We held a second in-person Armed Forces Veterans’ Hub at Whitley Wood Fire Station at the end of March 2022.

Pride

This year we once again attended Reading Pride, reaffirming our commitment to being open and welcoming to all members of the Berkshire community. The event was also an opportunity to promote careers and important safety advice. The Service aims to ensure that everyone feels safe to access its services, enabling us to better protect our County.

Positive Action Events

Since January 2022, several events targeting under-represented groups within the Service have been planned to encourage a wider range of people within the Berkshire community to consider a career as a firefighter.

The ‘Have a Go’ events are opportunities for people to try some of the entry tests for new firefighters at one of our stations. Having been disrupted by the pandemic, the ‘Have a Go’ events resumed with the first taking place at the end of March. All three of these events specifically targeted under-represented ethnic minority groups and women and were well attended by groups ranging between 10 and 20 in size.





Disability Confident Leader

We achieved Level Three 'Leader' status in the Disability Confident Scheme. In becoming a Disability Confident Leader, the Service joined approximately 360 other organisations that have achieved the highest level available in the government scheme.

This achievement is a testament to the work of colleagues across all areas of the Service to ensure that the organisation is accessible for all colleagues and members of the community we serve. Our Service became a member of the Disability Confident scheme in 2018 before becoming a Disability Confident Employer, the second level of the scheme, in 2019.

Change 100 Programme

The Change 100 Programme was developed by Leonard Cheshire and 2022 marks the fifth year of our Service's participation.

This year, our Service is planning on hosting five more interns across a wide range of roles. The Programme provides an opportunity for them to develop new skills and build confidence. All the while, the Service gains increased organisational diversity awareness and increases its capacity to deliver services.

Stonewall Diversity Champion

As a Stonewall Diversity Champion, we have access to a range of services and resources. This includes webinars and conference events, as well as a suite of resources and guidance aimed at helping the Service to make its workspaces as inclusive as possible.



As a Service, we are committed to engaging with young people in our communities and expanding career pathways into the fire and rescue service.



Wayne Bowcock, Chief Fire Officer

Together with Stonewall, the Service is building on its commitments to LGBTQ+ inclusion, including work with Reading Pride and a Trans Equality Policy.

Inclusive Employers: Inclusive Employers is a leading membership organisation for employers who are committed to prioritising inclusion and creating truly inclusive workplaces. As a member, we have access to a range of resources and services to support the work of the Service and all members of staff can benefit from these opportunities.

The Chairman's Internship Scheme

The Chairman's Internship Scheme is aimed at 16-18-year-old residents of Berkshire who are from ethnic backgrounds that are currently under-represented within the Service. Several of our teams and departments have volunteered to host the first intake of interns, offering a total of ten placements. Further work is ongoing to finalise the activities the interns will take part throughout summer.

Speaking of the scheme, Wayne Bowcock, Chief Fire Officer, said: "This scheme is an exciting opportunity. It offers a paid



internship and will give these students a fantastic opportunity to meet new people, develop new skills and enhance their future education and career prospects in a supportive work environment.

"As a Service, we are committed to engaging with young people in our communities and expanding career pathways into the fire and rescue service."

As part of the work to develop the scheme, the Project Team held engagement sessions with schools and community groups across Berkshire. Their feedback has so far been used to help finalise the design and shape of the internship programme.

Work with the Five Shires

The Five Shires Collaboration is a group that was set up in 2020 by the Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) of Five Services.

Our Service, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Services all joined together to create the Five Shires Group.

The Group exists to look at the wider role the Fire and Rescue Sector can have in addressing inequalities across our communities. Furthermore, the Group works to pool resources to further maximise the effectiveness of the combined EDI efforts of all five Services.

Crucially, the group is also currently beginning to look at how we compare our equality data and the measures we could develop to understand progress.

In Review

The expansion of our EDI programmes has greatly enhanced the Service's capacity to engage with people within and beyond the Organisation. Internally, membership within the Service of its EDI Forum has increased, crews actively participate in EDI events, and interns now contribute to the delivery of our Services countywide. Looking ahead, the Service will continue to better measure the results.

10
Roles

Across the Service are available to interns as part of the inaugural Chairman's Internship Scheme in summer 2022

3

'Have a Go'

Events took place in spring 2022 to encourage people from under-represented groups to become firefighters

5
Interns

Will join Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service this year as part of the Change 100 Programme



>> VALUING AND DEVELOPING OUR PEOPLE

In our [People Strategy](#), we set out how we will support staff to become the best public servants they can be, creating a workforce that can deliver an efficient and effective service on behalf of the Fire Authority, to manage all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the people of Berkshire.

Our Service is committed to valuing every employee as a unique individual. We want to recruit, develop and retain the most talented people, regardless of their background, and make best use of their talents to deliver effective services to our communities.

This year our Service aligned to the Core Code of Ethics, developed in partnership with the National Fire Chiefs Council, Local Government Association, and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, to support a consistent approach to ethics, including behaviours, by Fire and Rescue Services in England.

Every staff member is expected to behave in a professional manner and offer the highest standards of public service. Within our Service we have two key documents that outline the behaviours expected of our employees – the Employee Code of Conduct and the Behavioural Competency Framework. Both of these documents have been recently reviewed in line with the National Fire Chiefs Council Core Code of Ethics.

The Employee Code of Conduct forms part of every employee's contract of employment and provides a framework for behaviour, decisions and actions as an employee. It aims to help every member of our Service understand how to conduct



themselves in interactions with the public and towards each other.

The Behavioural Competency Framework (BCF) describes how the Employee Code of Conduct translates into expected behaviour. It defines how as a team we can work together, towards One Team, to ensure we deliver an outstanding service to the communities we serve. It makes clear everyone's responsibility to understand the organisations goals and to identify positive change and continual improvement.

We have distributed copies of the Employee Code of Conduct and the BCF to all staff via their line managers. This will give all staff easy access to both documents and the ability to use them as a quick reference guide.



Celebration Event

On Saturday 2 October 2021 we held a Summer Celebration event at Welford Park, near Newbury, which celebrated the outstanding achievements of staff and volunteers, particularly in responding during the preceding challenging 18-month period. It was also an opportunity to recognise those who had taken on additional responsibilities during the pandemic and to formally welcome a group of wholtime firefighters, who officially graduated in March 2020 and went straight to work on fire stations serving their communities.

During the pandemic, our Service supported with the following – driving ambulances for South Central Ambulance Service, visiting vulnerable residents in Slough, delivering of over six-million pieces of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), setting up the mass vaccination centre at the Madjeski Stadium in Reading, establishment of Slough Lateral Flow Testing Sites and surge testing in Sandhurst for variants of concern.

In addition, due to COVID-19 restrictions at the time, we held a Virtual Awards Ceremony on the evening of 18 May 2021 which was available to view on YouTube and provided an opportunity to pause and reflect on the outstanding and exceptional acts of courage and excellence shown by staff. Winners of 13 award categories were announced, alongside recognising those that have dedicated 20 years to serving the public.

Development Opportunities

Our Service seeks to continually develop every member of staff through the provision of Core Skills courses, a variety of training packages available via our Learning Management System and we develop leadership at all levels.

Staff Engagement Programme

During 2021, we embarked on an ambitious Staff Engagement Programme. In September, we started engagement visits across the Service, with the aim of finding about more on some areas highlighted in the 2019 staff survey. We managed to speak directly to over 200 staff in a six-month period.

We wanted to find out what's working well and what could be working better. With multiple sessions being run with staff across stations, on-call, Thames Valley Fire Control Service, middle managers and professional services staff, both in person and virtually, we were able to collect some really valuable and honest feedback from members of staff. Following the conclusion of these sessions, we collated the feedback into themes.

To capture feedback from across the Service, a staff engagement survey was also distributed. 52% of the service responded to a staff survey which we ran from 17 January – 22 February 2022.

The results from both of these activities will be reviewed and used to inform the refresh of our three people-centred plans - the People Strategy, the Consultation Strategy and the Communications and Engagement Strategy.



» CORPORATE MEASURES

Here is a summary of our Corporate Measures and how we have performed this year.

In addition, we publish our [Response Standard and key performance measures](#) on our website every month.

Measure	2021/2022 Target	2021/2022 Actual
Number of fire deaths in accidental dwelling fires	0	3
Number of fire casualties in accidental dwelling fires	20	28
Percentage of safeguarding referrals made to local authorities within 24 hours	100%	100%
The number of deliberate primary fires	129	129
The number of deliberate secondary fires	261	199
Prevention		
Number of Safe and Well visits (S&W's) delivered to those with individual characteristics making them at higher risk of death in the event of an accidental dwelling fire	5,700	5,887
Number of Safe and Well visits delivered to those who live in households with demographic characteristics associated with higher risk of injury in accidental dwelling fires	1,800	847
Percentage of home safety referrals, where there has been a threat or incidence of arson, completed within 48 hours	100%	100%
Protection		
Total Number of Full Fire Safety Audits carried out	1,100	947
Percentage of Full Fire Safety Audits with a 'Broadly Compliant' result	60%	57.2%
Percentage success rate when cases go to court	80%	100%
Percentage of statutory fire safety consultations completed within the required timeframes	95%	96.7%



Measure	2021/2022 Target	2021/2022 Actual
Response		
Number of Automatic Fire Alarm calls received	N/A	3,041
Percentage of Automatic Fire Alarm calls where RBFRS did not attend	N/A	23.5%
Percentage of occasions where the first fire engine arrives at an emergency incident within 10 minutes from time the emergency call was answered	75%	77.2%
Percentage of full shifts where there is adequate crewing on all 'wholetime' frontline fire engines	100%	87%
Percentage of hours where there is adequate crewing on on-call frontline pumping appliances	60%	43.6%
Customer Feedback		
Percentage of domestic respondents satisfied with the overall service	100%	100%
Percentage of commercial respondents satisfied with the overall service	95%	100%
Percentage of respondents satisfied with the services with regards to Fire Safety Audits	100%	98.7%
Percentage of domestic respondents satisfied with the service regards their safe and well visit	100%	99.2%
Number of complaints received	Monitor	27
Number of compliments received	Monitor	14
Human Resources and Learning and Development		
Percentage of working time lost to sickness, across all staff groups	4%	5.8%
Percentage of eligible operational staff successfully completing fitness test	100%	98.6%
Percentage of eligible staff with Personal Development Appraisals	100%	98.7%
Percentage of eligible operational staff in qualification	100%	97%
Number of formal grievances	N/A	7



Measure	2021/2022 Target	2021/2022 Actual
Health and Safety		
Number of RIDDOR accidents	4	4
Finance and Procurement		
Percentage of spend subject to competition	85%	91.0%
Compliant spend as a % of overall spend	100%	100%
Information Rights		
Number of Information Commissioner assessments finding that the Service has breached Information Rights Legislation (Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations).	0	0

**RIDDOR is the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013. Under RIDDOR we have a duty to report certain events, those events being accidents that led to a person being unfit for their normal work for more than 7 days, or 'specified injuries' which are more serious types of injuries. These include injuries such as broken bones, crush injuries and amputations.