APRIL 2025 - MARCH 2026

Hampshire & Isle of Wight FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

ANNUAL ASSURANCE

This report focuses on our assurance mechanisms in 2025/26 (1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026) across a variety of areas





INTRODUCTION

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2018) provides overall strategic direction to English Fire and Rescue Authorities. It sets out the Government's priorities and objectives and places a requirement on all Authorities to provide assurance to their communities and to Government on financial, governance and operational matters.

This Statement of Assurance, which is updated annually, covers the period 1st April 2025 through to 31st March 2026. It provides the necessary accountability and transparency to the people of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and evidence that their Fire and Rescue Service continues to deliver on the expectations detailed within both the National Framework and our own Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), our Safety Plan 2025-30.

This statement sits alongside our Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement, Annual Directorate Delivery Plans, and the Mid-Year and Annual Performance Reports. It details what measures are in place to assure that the Fire Authority's performance is efficient, economical, and effective.



Matt Robertson
Director of Corporate Services

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ASSURANCE DECLARATION

From the Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Authority

OUR APPROACH TO ASSURANCE

The Service undertakes a wide range of assurance activities across the Service. This Statement provides the Authority, the communities of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and Government with an overview of the assurance mechanisms on financial, governance and operational matters, in-line with the requirement of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2018).

The Statement has been restructured around five main areas:



"The Service uses performance reporting and data analysis to assess our effectiveness, efficiency, and financial position; and to inform decisions we make and where we target our resources"

01

HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT



HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT

OVERVIEW

We cover a large geographic area of over 1,500 square miles, with over 200 miles of coast, and a population of just over 2 million. It is an area rich in history, with national parks such as the New Forest, significant places of interest, and heritage sites (over 13,000 in Hampshire and 2,000 on the Isle of Wight).

The cities of Southampton, Portsmouth, Basingstoke, and Winchester are all urban areas with growing populations, with developing commercial and industrial areas, thriving universities and colleges, national infrastructure and heritage sites such as the iconic Winchester Cathedral.

The Isle of Wight is the largest and second most populated island in England, although 80% of its population is based on just 20% of its land mass. It is a popular tourist destination, with its economy primarily based around light industry, tourism and the service sector.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight is a varied area. Industry is growing around the Winchester and Basingstoke areas, yet a short distance away are remote villages with thatched and listed buildings. The area has many important military bases, like the Army's home in Aldershot and the Navy's home in Portsmouth. We also have Royal Air Force stations in Odiham.

We work with some hazardous sites, such as the oil and gas sites along the Solent. There are also lots of busy transport places, like airports, ferry and cruise terminals, ports, motorways and railways. We have some large hospitals, prisons and other buildings that we need to look after. Our area also hosts some large events, like the Isle of Wight music festival, Cowes Week, Victorious Festival, the Southampton Boat Show and Farnborough International Airshow.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight is bordered by five counties: Dorset, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Surrey, and West Sussex. The Solent, which is the water between Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, is one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world and is predominantly served by the commercial ports of Southampton and Portsmouth.

Between 2011 and 2021, the population of our area increased by 5.3%. This was an increase of 5.6% on the mainland and 1.5% on the island.

We employ around 1,500 people, including around 40 firefighters in our Fire Control room, over 350 specialist staff, and around 1,100 firefighters (including over 250 who have multiple contracts and are both a whole-time and on-call firefighter at different locations). Some of our specialist staff also have additional roles as on-call firefighters. This means we have around 700 on-call firefighters dedicated to their roles.

For more detail about Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service, please see here: HIWFRS Safety Plan 2025 - 2030.

02

GOVERNANCE

GOVERNANCE

GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE OVERVIEW

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is a combined authority made up of 11 elected members who collaborate and make collective decisions.

Our Fire Authority is made up of eight Hampshire County Council members, one Isle of Wight Council member, one Portsmouth City Council member and one Southampton City Council member. The Authority delegates responsibility for a wide range of decisions relating to operational delivery to the Chief Fire Officer (or other officers). Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) is the name given to the operational fire and rescue service led by the Chief Fire Officer. The Service staff and officers are employed by the Authority to deliver the day-to-day operational functions.

To support this, we have a Scheme of Delegation, Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations combined into the Authority's Constitution. The Constitution sets out in a single place and in clear language, how the Authority

For more details on our Constitution, please see: HIWFRA Constitution.

To support our Constitution, it is essential for us to have an appropriate and robust corporate governance framework.

The framework includes a Corporate Governance Structure that defines meetings, establishes clear reporting lines and streamlines decision making, enabling us to monitor the achievement of our priorities and assess whether they deliver appropriate, cost effective and efficient services.

At the highest level, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority make key strategic decisions in meetings that are open to the public. It is supported by the Audit and Governance Committee, which includes 5 members and meets quarterly.



Before items are brought to the Authority, they are first considered by the Service's Executive Group (EG), the Service's primary decision-making body. The EG is supported by Boards aligned to the Directorate structure, which make directorate-level decisions in accordance with the Officer Scheme of Authorisation, and oversee planning and performance. These Boards are, in turn, supported by subordinate groups.

The Annual Governance Statement is a legal requirement and has been prepared in accordance with CIPFA guidance. It sets out how the organisation has reviewed and maintained its governance arrangements during the year, ensuring it operates effectively, transparently, and in compliance with relevant laws and regulations. This document is in draft and awaiting signing. The final signed version will be published in due course and will replace this draft.

Assurance of our governance framework is presented in our Annual Governance Statement alongside the Local Code of Governance, which is an essential part of our financial Statement of Accounts. Alongside the publishing of the Governance Statement, the Service publish information on our website as part of the Transparency Code 2015: Information we publish - Transparency Code 2025

GOVERNANCE

COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLANNING OVERVIEW



Our Safety Plan 2025-2030 was developed using the national Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) methodology. Through this methodology, which identifies potential risks that could affect communities and how we can address them, our Safety Plan 2025-2030 was launched: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Authority Safety Plan

The 2025/26 year was the first year of the refreshed Safety Plan. During this year, there was regular scrutiny of our progress in delivering directorate improvement activities, with reporting internally, including to the Executive Group, and to the Fire Authority – the latter via the published Mid-Year and Annual Performance Reports.

The Annual Performance Report was presented to the Fire Authority on 9 June 2026: Annual Performance Report

Our performance reporting is brigaded by our current Safety Plan objectives:

- Protecting people, especially those who need it most.
- Working with others to make buildings safer.
- Preparing for emergencies, and being there if you need us.
- Empowering our teams to do their best.
- Ensuring the best use of our funding, people and assets.

Following extensive work in-line with the CRMP fire standard, including producing station risk profiles and the Identification and analysis of risk to inform the 2025-30 Safety Plan (October 2023), and consulting with the public, on 5 February 2025 the HIWFRA approved the Safety Plan 2025-30.

With the appointment of the new Chief Fire Officer and another annual identification of internal and external risk carried out to support the development of 2026/27 directorate delivery plans, the Safety Plan 2025-30 was refreshed in February 2026: HIWFRS Safety Plan 2025 – 2030.

More specifically from 1 April 2025, the Service utilised a refreshed approach to the Strategic Assessment of Risk to inform annual Directorate Delivery Plans. These plans are developed following a series of quarterly reviews and extensive planning, which involves a focus on:

- The progress and benefits of in-year activities that the Service has agreed.
- Service learning, evaluation and performance insights.
- Extensive benchmarking (to other comparable fire and rescue services, and other national data, where available).
- A review of internal and external risks.
- Internal PESTLEO analysis.
- Qualitative and quantitative analysis from engagement with the public and stakeholders.

For more information about CRMP, please see the approved Fire Standard from the Fire Standards Board, as well as its associated guidance documents: Community Risk Management Planning | Fire Standards Board

03

FINANCIAL ASSURANCE

FINANCIAL ASSURANCE

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT



All local authorities are required to adopt 'proper accounting practice' based on either statutory requirements or the code of practice on local authority accounting.

The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for the proper administration of the Authority's financial affairs under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Chief Financial Officer advices the Authority and is a full member of the Service's Executive Group.

The Authority's approach to financial governance is then set out within the Authority's financial regulations, which forms part of the overall Constitution.

The Authority also has a Financial Management Policy in place, which includes the Authority's eight financial management principles. The policy sets out the Authority's commitment to effective and efficient financial management and use of public funds.

This is further supported by the Corporate Governance Policy and the procedures in place for the prevention of theft, fraud, bribery, corruption and money laundering. A Register of Interests and a register of Gifts and Hospitality are also maintained.

The Authority has an excellent track record of financial management. Directors and their teams across the organisation scrutinise spend to make sure that our financial resources support delivery of our priorities and that value for money is delivered. This is supported by our external auditor's assessment of our value for money arrangements and our self assessment of compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code.

Prudent medium-term financial planning has enabled us to deliver balanced budgets while continuing to invest for the future and make reasonable allowances for risk. This approach also enables us to plan and deliver savings in a timely and co-ordinated way when they are required. It is becoming more challenging to find ways to balance the budget.

Our Medium-Term Financial Plan is regularly updated and reported to the Executive Group and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority. This includes appropriate assumptions and highlights areas of risk and uncertainty as well as setting out mitigations that are in place.

Monitoring reports are taken quarterly with an outturn position at year end. Financial risks are also considered as part of the Organisational Risk Register as appropriate. The Authority also prepares, monitors and reports against its Reserves Strategy, Capital and Investment Strategy, and Treasury Management Strategy. These help to ensure compliance with guidance and requirements including the Prudential Code and the Treasury Management Code.

An annual Statement of Accounts is produced and published at the end of each year in accordance with the accounting requirements. This is externally audited to ensure it presents a 'true and fair view' of the Authority's finances.

The Draft Statement of Accounts for 2025/26 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). These Accounts aim to provide information so that members of the public, including electors and residents of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Fire and Rescue Authority Members, partners, stakeholders and other interested parties can understand the overall financial position of the Authority and the outturn position for 2025/26.

FINANCIAL ASSURANCE

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

There are two main ways that financial performance is reported and assessed:

- Delivery against the approved annual revenue budget, capital programme and associated strategies
- The annual statement of accounts and external audit

The Authority approves the revenue budget including the council tax precept in February each year alongside the capital programme and updates to the Reserves Strategy, Capital and Investment Strategy, and Treasury Management Strategy. Financial performance throughout the year is then monitored, with regularly quarterly reports to the Authority and an end of year outturn report to confirm performance against the agreed budget.

Public sector bodies are also required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations to publish draft accounts which are then audited. Our draft accounts for financial year 2024/25 were published by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2025. Our external auditors are Ernst and Young (EY) and they attend the Audit and Governance Committee to provide updates on audit progress and results. The auditor provided their opinion on the 2024/25 accounts before the statutory backstop date of 27 February 2026.

The audit of the accounts in recent years has been impacted by the national audit backlog and the measures put in place to address this. This meant the auditors were not able to audit the accounts in 2022/23, resulting in a disclaimed audit opinion. Progress has been made over the subsequent two years to build back assurance and the auditor was able to issue a qualified opinion for 2024/25 and has confirmed the Authority is on track to return to unqualified opinions in line with the national timetable. The disclaimed and qualified audit opinions are due to the impact of the national audit backlog and not any issues identified by the auditors as part of their audit work. Draft accounts for 2025/26 will be published on time by 30 June 2026 allowing the period of public inspection to begin and the audit of the accounts to take place.

For more details of our latest Statement of Accounts, please see: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service Information we publish

Financial performance is also considered as part of our Annual Performance Report, where the focus is on comparative costs, efficiencies, income generation and our reserves position: Performance - Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service, Official website of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service



FINANCIAL ASSURANCE

TRANSPARENCY

The Local Government Transparency Code 2015 is designed to ensure greater transparency of local authority data. In compliance with this code, we publish the following public data:

- Expenditure exceeding £500
- Procurement card transactions
- Procurement information
- Contracts register
- Tenders
- Local Authority Land
- Grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations
- Organisation chart
- Trade Union facility time
- Senior salaries
- Constitution
- Pay multiple

We ensure that the publication of any data complies with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which came into effect in May 2018.

For more details please see: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service, Transparency

We also facilitate the request for any additional information through a well-managed Freedom of Information request process. For more details on how to make a request for information please see: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service Contact Us



04

PEOPLE & CULTURE ASSURANCE

PEOPLE & CULTURE

OVERVIEW

We look after each other by creating great places to work and promoting the health, wellbeing and safety of our people.

The People & Organisational Development Delivery Plan 2025-2030 sets out how the Service will develop, support and manage its workforce to deliver the Service Safety Plan, ensuring staff are skilled, healthy, engaged and aligned to organisational priorities. It establishes a clear framework for workforce planning, learning and development, culture, wellbeing and governance, enabling high performance, continuous improvement and effective service delivery now and in the future.

The Directorate Delivery Plans all align to the new five objectives of the Service:



To support delivery of the Service Safety Plan, POD has defined three clear areas of focus which guide how we prioritise activity, allocate resources and measure success. These areas ensure our work remains aligned to organisational objectives, supports our people effectively, and drives continuous improvement across the Service.

Our three areas of focus:



Operational Excellence ensures the workforce has the capability, skills and capacity to deliver a high-quality service, through effective training, workforce planning, HR support and leadership development.



Culture and Connectivity focuses on building an inclusive, values-driven organisation where people feel engaged, informed and empowered, supported by strong communication and meaningful staff involvement.



Organisational Accountability ensures that robust governance, data, policies and performance frameworks are in place so that decisions are evidence-based, standards are maintained, and continuous improvement is achieved across all people-related activity.

PEOPLE & CULTURE

CULTURE & VALUES OVERVIEW

We have reached the end of our current Equality Objectives, originally launched in 2022. These objectives set out our commitment to diversity, equality and equity, and the steps our Service is taking to foster a more inclusive, representative, respectful and accessible culture. By promoting an inclusive environment, we strengthen our ability to attract, recruit and retain a diverse range of talents and perspectives.

We recognise that creating an inclusive Service culture is a collective responsibility. Our Service Values and Behaviours, developed collaboratively by our people, play a vital role in overcoming barriers and driving progress towards our objectives.

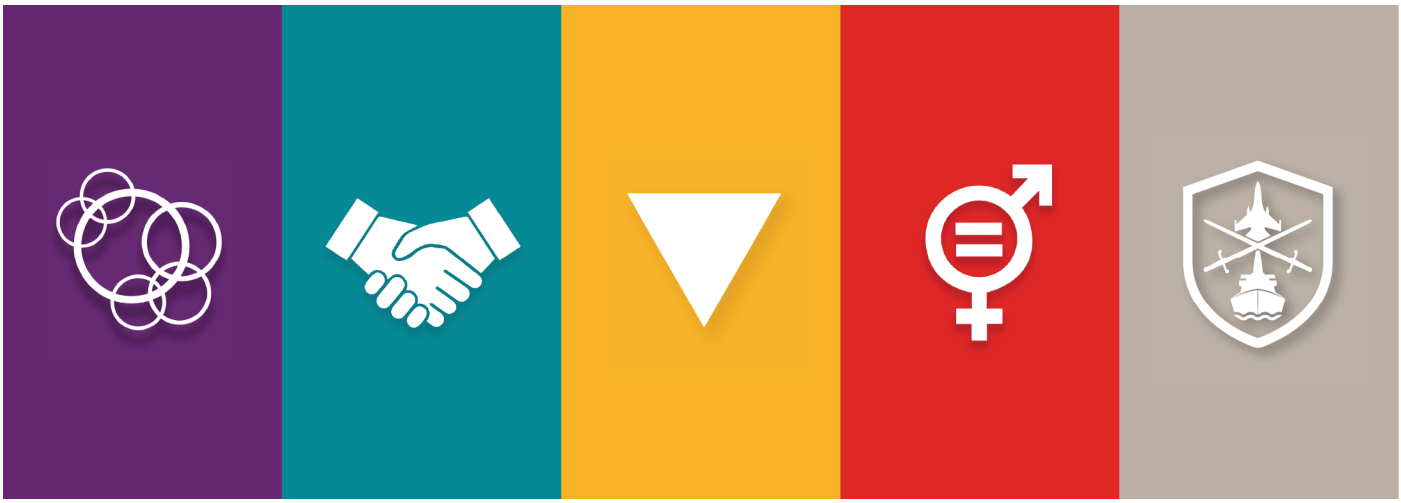
Our staff network groups – **FireENABLE**, **FireREACH**, **FirePROUD**, **FireINSPIRE**, and the newest; **FireFORCES** – continue to play a significant role in shaping and influencing positive change across the Service.

Over the past 12 months, the Service has continued to deliver activities in support of our Equality Objectives. A key focus has been educating and raising awareness of EDI, Wellbeing and Culture discussions across our workforce through a suite of mandatory training sessions.

We also recognise and celebrate the contributions of our people through initiatives such as peer-to-peer recognition, Chief Fire Officer Commendations, Values Champion awards and other recognition schemes. These approaches reinforce that our people are valued and help to share positive stories about how great our people are and the difference they make to the community and our organisation.

At a time of significant change and uncertainty, we recognise that having a healthy, well-supported and resilient workforce is critical to our success. We have therefore enhanced our wellbeing provision and continue to improve accessibility to these services. This work aligns with the objectives within our Wellbeing Strategy [2024-2028], which focuses on empowering staff and promoting preventative support, closely linked to our Service Values and Behaviours.

We remain committed to legislative compliance while continuing to learn from experiences and expertise within our organisation. Following engagement with Staff Network Groups, the Culture Ethics and Behaviour Group, and colleagues more widely, we have evolved our Equality Objectives. These updated objectives align with our recent Areas of Focus and allow us to strive further towards creating an inclusive workplace culture.



PEOPLE & CULTURE

ACCOUNTABILITY & SUPPORT

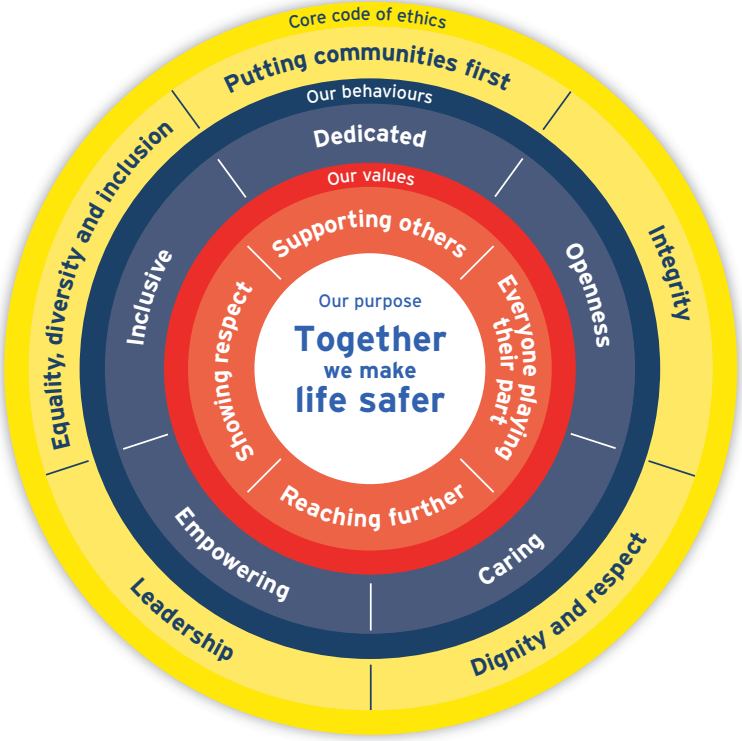
To ensure accountability, we established an EDI, Wellbeing and Culture Committee which monitors progress against our Equality Objectives and associated action plans. The committee continues to review key metrics through the People & Culture Dashboard and provide support to those leading on EDI, Wellbeing, or Culture projects across the Service.

We provide a range of resources to support colleagues with wellbeing and EDI awareness, including reasonable adjustments, personal support passports and a variety of positive action initiatives. These resources are designed to enable colleagues to perform at their best and to feel supported within the workplace.

We continue to utilise a Personal Development Review (PDR) process, which is facilitated through an app. This is complimented by a talent matrix, which provides line managers with the opportunity to grade their direct reports and allocate development, based on sustained performance and potential for progression. Line managers also comment on an individual's contribution to the service and their ability to demonstrate the service Values and Behaviours.

Recruitment, promotion, and selection processes have included criteria linked to our service Values and Behaviours. This has improved people's understanding of the Values and Behaviours and their ability to demonstrate how they are role modelling them in their daily work.

We deliver against the Fire Standards for leading the service, leading and developing people, alongside the Core Code of Ethics. This has strengthened our leadership development offer at all levels and ensures it aligns with the NFCC Leadership Framework.



The actions are driving our Directorate Plan in People and Organisational Development for the future. Part of the assurance framework around Fire Standards has included assessing the adoption of the Code of Ethics for a second time and completing the initial analysis of the Leading and Developing People and Leading the Service Fire Standards. The most recent assurance ratings for each are: Code of Ethics, reasonable; Leading and Developing People, reasonable; Leading the Service, reasonable.

PEOPLE & CULTURE

CULTURE

In 2023, we commissioned an independent culture review, incorporating a survey and focus groups to better understand our organisational culture. The report, published in December 2023, indicated that colleagues recognise positive cultural improvements across the Service. It also identified that colleagues generally experience positive working relationships with peers and line managers and share a strong sense of purpose.

The Service is clear that behaviours falling below expected standards are not acceptable and will be addressed consistently wherever they occur. The review supports this position and identified that colleagues are increasingly confident in calling out and challenging inappropriate behaviour. However, there were also areas for improvement, particularly in addressing negative behaviours and ensuring consistency of experience across all areas of the organisation.

To continue building on this insight, we have established 6-monthly pulse surveys, helping us further understand colleague perspectives on culture. The results of each survey are shared alongside an action plan to ensure transparency and accountability. Key themes have included discussions of visible leadership and strengthening confidence in reporting inappropriate behaviours.

In November 2025, we achieved White Ribbon Accredited Status, marking an important milestone in our commitment to fostering a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace. Our accreditation forms part of a 3-year action plan aimed at promoting a culture of respect and zero tolerance towards contra behaviours such as sexual harassment.

We have also continued to develop the Culture, Ethics and Behaviours group, refining its purpose and role within the organisation. The group is made up of a diverse, voluntary membership of colleagues from



all areas of the Service who are passionate about contributing to cultural improvement. Its purpose is to drive continuous improvement by listening to colleagues, promoting positive behaviours, and identifying opportunities to address behaviours that fall below expected standards. The group is currently exploring how it can be further integrated into the wider plans for Service Connectivity, ensuring alignment with broader organisational priorities and strengthening its impact.

For more information on our Values, please see: Our Values

PEOPLE & CULTURE

PEOPLE & CULTURE PERFORMANCE

We strive for excellence through delivering outstanding training and supporting people to achieve their full potential. Developing a skilled workforce begins with recruitment, training and development programmes, leading into our Maintenance of Competence Scheme. We ensure our staff competencies are regularly assessed and core competencies such as safe working at heights, the use of breathing apparatus, applying incident command, and fitness levels are assured at an appropriate level. There is also significant focus on all staff completing mandatory non-operational training in areas such as cyber security, GDPR and health and safety.

We also monitor staff sickness through regular reporting and national benchmarking, with performance in this and other people-related areas regularly reviewed by our People and Organisational Development (P&OD) Directorate Board. We also monitor our operational establishment and vacancies through our Resource Management Team. This team considers all aspects of resource management and staff wellbeing to ensure teams are appropriately supported and to maximise our availability. This includes developing new ways of recruiting and retaining on-call staff based on a range of modelling and analysis; and modelling anticipated whole-time leavers.

The Executive Group and the Fire Authority have received additional reporting and insights covering our people performance. This has included a focus on sickness, availability and health and safety data. For more detail, please refer to the Mid-Year and Annual Performance Reports, which go to the Fire Authority: see here.

Our P&OD Board reviews a wide range of metrics in the Service's new People and Culture PowerBI dashboard, which was released in January 2025. The dashboard aligns to the national good practice in the NFCC's culture dashboard methodology.

This dashboard includes a wide variety of key performance indicators to measure our people and culture-related performance, and supplements other operationally-focused dashboards.

The dashboard helps us identify any areas for improvement and good practice that will enable us to make improvements to our workplace culture, support our people and empower our teams to do their best. Key performance indicators include (but are not limited to) sickness and light duties levels, operational competence and mandatory training completion, SaySo (our confidential reporting line) reporting, HR casework volumes, and workforce diversity.

We also have a strategic Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Culture Board who review a wide range of data to monitor our performance against our equality objectives – through scrutiny of dashboard data, as well as information in the Mid-Year and Annual Equality Statements.

We are committed to improving our understanding of the cultural health of HIWFRS through further surveys and focus groups. The Service also runs regular staff 'pulse' surveys to assess how staff are feeling in a range of areas, and compare the results to public sector benchmark data – to help identify any subsequent actions that need to be taken.

Finally, to support workforce planning across the Service (and our strategic workforce plan), the Service undertakes a range of people-related data analysis, including a focus on establishment, progression, workforce diversity, and critical roles.

PEOPLE & CULTURE

HEALTH & SAFETY

In April 2025, the Fire Authority agreed its annual Health and Safety and Statement of Intent including putting health and safety at the heart of everything the Service does: HIWFRA 15 April 2025: Health and Safety Statement of Intent 2025/26.

This Statement sits alongside the Fire Authority's Health and Safety Policy.

We are significantly investing to better manage - and reduce the exposure to - contaminants. Managing contaminants is an important consideration in our building and vehicle improvement plans, including zoning and flows in fire stations so that contaminated equipment and clothing is stored away from communal areas and removing breathing apparatus and other dirty equipment from the cab area. The first of these fire engines has now entered service.

Health & Safety performance indicators are regularly monitored by the Health & Safety Team, with quarterly reporting into the Health & Safety Committee, which is chaired by the Director of Corporate Services. For more detail on Health and Safety reporting, please see the Mid-Year and Annual Performance Reports, which go to the Fire Authority: Performance - Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service, Official website of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service



05

ORGANISATIONAL ASSURANCE

ORGANISATIONAL ASSURANCE

HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

HMICFRS DIAGNOSTIC AREA	INSPECTION GRADE AUGUST 2025
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	ADEQUATE
Preventing fires and other risks	GOOD
Protecting the public through fire regulation	ADEQUATE
Responding to fire and other emergencies	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT
Responding to major and multi agency incidents	ADEQUATE
Making best use of resources	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT
Making the FRS affordable now and in the future	GOOD
Promoting the right values and culture	ADEQUATE
Getting the right people with the right skills	INADEQUATE
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT
Managing performance and developing leaders	ADEQUATE

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) assessment examine the service's effectiveness, efficiency and how well it looks after its people. It is designed to give the public information about how their local fire and rescue service is performing in several important areas, in a way that is comparable with other services across England.

In August 2025, the HMICFRS published the Round 3 inspection report for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service. HMICFRS inspection, much like internal audit, is a crucial part of our wide-ranging assurance programme and we are committed to using inspection as an opportunity to learn. The report also provides our communities with a view of how we are performing across the Service, for example in terms of how we understand, prevent and respond to fires and other incidents and risks.

The HMICFRS round 3 inspection took place between January and April 2025. The Service received 18 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) and two Cause of Concern. The Service are working with HMICFRS to ensure areas for improvement and concerns are addressed.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service 2023-2025 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

The Service has provided ongoing six-monthly reporting into the Authority's Audit & Governance Committee on our progress against addressing the AFIs and Cause of Concern's identified from the inspectorate report.

Audit and Governance Committee, 5 December 2025: HMICFRS inspection outcome update reporting

ORGANISATIONAL ASSURANCE

FIRE STANDARDS ASSURANCE

As part of the reforms for fire and rescue services in England, the Fire Standards Board was created to introduce new standards to the fire sector. The intention being to help drive continual improvement across the services alongside the re-introduction of inspection arrangements. The mission for the Fire Standards Board is to oversee the development and maintenance of a suite of professional standards that set out "what good looks like".

Currently there are 19 approved Fire Standards. When a new Standard is being developed, we take a proactive approach by engaging with the consultation process. This gives us an early opportunity to review the proposed Standard and begin to assess our own organisation to identify any gaps. Once the Standard has been approved, it will form a core part of our assurance activity whereby we will seek to substantiate our compliance with a particular standard, identifying strengths, opportunities, gaps and action plans.

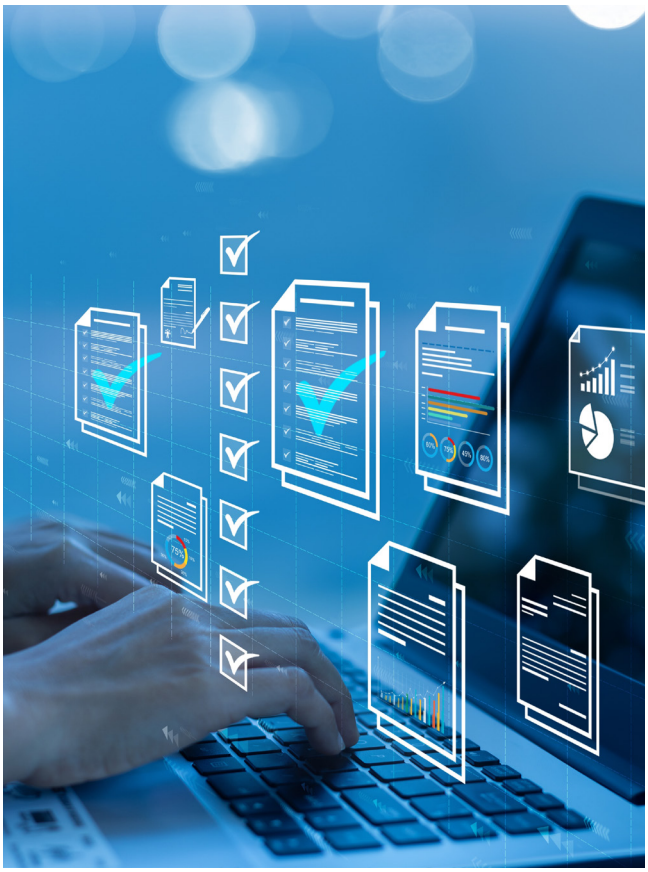
As at March 2026, there are 19 approved Fire Standards across a wide range of operational and non-operational areas, including Emergency Response Driving, Community Risk Management Planning (CRMP) and the Code of Ethics. The Standards have 466 requirements in total; and the Service undertakes activity to assure ourselves that we are compliant with them.

By implementing our robust Fire Standards assurance procedure, we have assured nine standards as 'substantial' and nine as 'reasonable'. We are still carrying out the assurance process for the Digital and Cyber Fire Standard. Where improvements are identified actions are carried out to strengthen areas of weakness.

This is core part of our business as usual assurance activity and Fire Standards are assessed as part of a rolling programme whereby subject matter experts, Heads of Service and Directors are all involved in the assurance process. Progress against the adoption of Fire Standards across the Service is reported to the Audit and Governance Committee every six months.

For more information on the progress on the Fire Standards see here: Audit and Governance Committee 10 March 2026 Fire Standards update report

Further information is also available in the Mid-Year Performance Update and Annual Performance Report to the Fire Authority.



ORGANISATIONAL ASSURANCE

INTERNAL AUDIT

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority is responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate risk management processes, control systems, accounting records and governance arrangements. Internal audit plays a vital role in advising Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority that these arrangements are in place and operating effectively. Our internal audits are carried out by the Southern Internal Audit Partnership (SIAP) who also assist us in the development of future audit plans.

The Service has a wide range of assurance mechanisms in place to identify risks, areas for improvement, and good practice to disseminate.

Our overall internal audit assurance conclusion for 2025/26 is 'reasonable', the same opinion as in 2024/25. This means our internal auditors consider the Service's framework of governance, risk management and control is 'reasonable', and audit testing has demonstrated controls to be working in practice.

This assurance level indicates that there is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and controls in place with some areas where there is scope for improvement identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the audited area. This assurance level is testament to our extensive focus on risk-based internal audit planning and internal audit more widely.

Details of our internal audits are reported to the Executive Group and the Authority through our Audit and Governance Committee. This includes the progress of management actions resulting from observations of improvements required, which we monitor closely and report on internally – with Heads of Service accountable for the delivery of actions.

For more details, please see papers submitted to the Audit and Governance Committee, available here.



ORGANISATIONAL ASSURANCE

SERVICE LEARNING

Service Learning is the process used to capture, review, and apply insights from operational and organisational activity. It supports the identification of risks, monitoring of trends, and sharing of good practice across the service and wider sector, drawing on sources such as feedback, debriefs, assurance activity, exercises, audits, and investigations.

Learning is assessed using a red, amber, green, and blue rating system. Most cases are low risk; in 2025/26 there was one red and 16 amber across key areas. This supports clear risk oversight and closer monitoring of higher-risk learning.

In 2025/26, 577 specific actionable learning recommendations were raised. The roll-out of a new submit learning system in December 2024, continues to make it easier to analyse the risk level and themes of learning with planned further updates in 2026. During 2025/26 the most common learning themes relate to resources, equipment and appliances, and training.

To keep colleagues informed about enhancements driven by submitted learning, we've created the "You Said, We Did" page on our Portal (staff intranet). This dedicated page ensures transparency by outlining implemented changes and demonstrating how feedback contributes to ongoing improvements.



In 2026/27, we will explore and develop more structured ways to capture broader organisational learning, improving how insights are recorded, shared, and used to inform performance.

EVALUATIONS

In 2025, we launched our Evaluation Programme, aligned to our change management approach. Evaluation assesses how activities, projects, or changes are designed and delivered, and the outcomes they achieve.

We have a broad and developing pipeline of cross-directorate evaluations in place, covering priority areas of service delivery and organisational change. This programme supports a consistent, evidence-based approach to learning, strengthening accountability and informing future decision-making across the Service.

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OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

OVERVIEW



The National Framework outlines the requirement placed upon Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) to provide assurance on operational matters which are determined locally by them in partnership with their local communities, citizens, businesses, and others.

FRA's function within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework of which the key legislative documents defining these responsibilities are:

- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- Localism Act 2011
- Policing and Crime Act 2017
- Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

This section aims to provide assurance that our service is delivered in line with our statutory responsibilities and with due regard to the expectations set out in our Safety Plan, including cross-border, multi-authority, and national incident arrangements.

We work together to understand different community needs and deliver accessible, local services which build safer places. Our main operational aim is to prevent incidents from occurring and protect people from harm should an incident occur.

OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

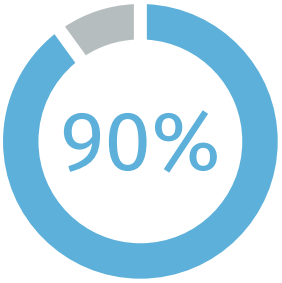
PREVENTION

To help mitigate the risk of fire in homes and the subsequent harm these can cause, our firefighters, designated Community Safety Advisors and Officers, volunteers and partner agencies carry out 'Home Fire Safety' visits to our targeted risk groups.

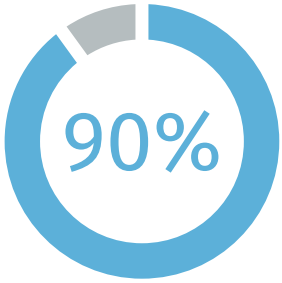
Recognising that our most vulnerable risk groups align with that of our partners in Health, potential hazards that may affect a vulnerable person's wellbeing are considered. Our Home Fire Safety visits are primarily delivered to individuals who have been referred to us by our partners, however, we also use incident data, demographic profiling tools and externally provided data sets to identify those who may benefit from an intervention.

In 2025/26, we undertook 16,675 Home Fire Safety visits, slightly less than the previous financial year but more than 400 above our annual target of 16,228. This continues to show positive steps and is a fantastic achievement by our Prevention team and our station-based colleagues over the previous two financial years. We also partner with the Blue Lamp Trust, a non-profit organisation promoting and enhancing community safety. In 2025/26, they delivered 639 visits.

We also continue to evaluate our prevention activity to assess the quality of visits and the behavioural changes these influence:



OF PEOPLE FELT SAFER IN THEIR HOME FOLLOWING THE VISIT



OF PEOPLE CHANGED THEIR BEHAVIOUR FOLLOWING THE VISIT

In January 2025, HMICFRS rated our prevention activity as 'good'.

To view more information on keeping safe at home please see: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service At Home

We deliver a range of interventions through our Children and Young People (CYP) Team. These include: Fire education within schools; Early Intervention programmes; Firewise; and a range of children and young people initiatives (including Fire Cadets). In the last financial year, we conducted 402 school visits involving around 12,000 children, received 43 Firewise referrals and 71 early intervention referrals. These initiatives seek to deliver fire safety information but also help build confidence and support wider social issues facing young people today. We provide interactive safety messages through our fun educational website: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service Kidzone and Schools.

Our ICT capability and systems have supported the delivery of these programmes. Home learning pages within our KidZone on our website are also being kept up to date with new products for children, parents and teachers.

Additionally, our Fire Investigation team lead investigations post incident to determine the cause of fires and ensure learning. To view more information on arson reduction, please see: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service Reducing Risk of Arson

The Prevention Fire Standard has been adopted by the Service and has a current assurance rating of Substantial. The Safeguarding Fire Standard has also been adopted and assured, with its current rating being substantial. These ratings mean that there is a sound system of assurance in place which can be evidenced, and any areas that require strengthening have a comprehensive plan in place.

OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

PROTECTION

In the workplace, the responsibility of fire safety is the business owners, however, to support businesses we deliver a High-Risk Residential Based Interventions Programme, Risk Based Interventions Programme and a Local Based Interventions Programme. These targeted programmes enable the support to businesses by:

- Telling businesses what they need to do to comply with fire safety law.
- Helping businesses carry out a fire risk assessment.
- Helping businesses identify the general fire precautions they need to have in place.
- Challenging all or parts of a fire risk assessment where concerns are identified.
- Taking further action if all the risks are not considered.

We undertake a wide range of Protection interventions, including Fire Safety Audits (an examination of the premises and relevant documents to ascertain how the premises are being managed with regards to fire safety) and other fire safety audit related interventions.

In 2025/26, the Service completed 1,544 Fire Safety Audit related interventions, 6% more than in 2024/25. We have also increased other protection jobs, with 656 carried out in 2025/26, a 25% increase on last year and a 42% increase compared to 2023/24.

Furthermore, one of the Service's routes to undertake fire safety audit related interventions comes from operational personnel (including at stations and Prevention teams) identifying and reporting 'Alleged Fire Risks' (AFRs). Over the last three years, there has been a significant increase in AFRs. In 2025/26, we carried out 1,001 AFRs, slightly less than last year (1,038) but still a 12% increase versus 2023/24 (up from 890).

The 2025 HMICFRS inspection rated out Protection department as adequate, highlighting that we had introduced a new quality assurance process and we had good arrangements in place to adapt to new legislation. It also highlighted how well we work with other enforcement partners including the Care Quality Commission.

A wide range of Protection activity continues under our Primary Authority Scheme, including communication and engagement activity to raise awareness that businesses needed to be prepared for new fire safety legislation that came into place this financial year.

Our Fire Engineering and Consultation Team also reduce risk in Hampshire to occupants and firefighters by working alongside a wide group of stakeholders to contribute to building regulation consultations that are received from building control bodies locally and nationally. In 2025/26, we carried out a total of 3,074 consultations, 19% less than the 3,782 done in 2024/25. However, by far the largest consultation type we respond to is Business Regulation consultations, where we carried out 1,599 in 2025/26. To view more information on keeping safe at work please see: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service The Workplace

The Protection Fire Standard has been adopted by the Service. The most recent assessment of this standard has resulted in a substantial assurance rating which means there are sound systems of control in place with policies and procedures embedded, and regular scrutiny including independently.

OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

RESPONSE

We work hard to keep our communities safe through education and safety measures. However, we accept incidents will still occur, and in the event of a call to an emergency, we have effective strategies in place to respond to numerous different types of incidents. We operate from several locations including 59 strategically positioned fire stations. Our fire stations are purpose built and located in cities, towns, and villages, close to residential, commercial and industrial areas. Our frontline resources and fire appliances are spread across these stations according to the local risk factors.

The Service's fire stations consist of:

- 5 fire stations staffed 24 hours a day by firefighters based at the station.
- 46 fire stations with around the clock cover provided by on-call firefighters, and
- 10 fire stations staffed 24 hours a day by firefighters based at the station with the addition of on-call cover.

As well as our frontline fire appliances, we also have several specialist capabilities which assist us in dealing with a variety of different incidents. Our specialist capability teams provide us with an enhanced range of equipment, skills and knowledge for dealing with a wide range of unusual and complex incidents. They can respond to emergency incidents within our county and, as part of a national resilience arrangement, anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Our specialist capabilities include: Urban Search and Rescue Unit; Rope Rescue; Water Rescue Units; Animal Rescue Units; Forensic Fire Investigation Team; Wildfire Units; Environmental Units; Marine Response Team; Hazardous Materials and Detection, Identification and Monitoring Unit and Co-Responders.

There were 21,333 incidents in 2025/26, slightly higher to 2024/25 but overall volumes being fairly stable over the last five years. An increase in fires was seen owing to a 54% increase in outdoor fires. This was offset by a reduction in false alarms due to our operational policy change to no longer attend AFAs at low-risk commercial premises between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00, unless there is a confirmed fire.

For the first time in four years, the annual critical response time performance has stayed the same and not slowed, remaining at 9 minutes and 49 seconds in 2025/26. Further information on our performance is outlined in our Annual Performance Report, but we respond faster to higher risk areas.



ORGANISATIONAL ASSURANCE

MAJOR INCIDENT RESPONSE AND THE WORK OF THE LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUM

Emergency services are facing an increased variety of demanding situations. Major incidents caused by natural disasters, industrial accidents and the threat of terror attacks are challenges that we need to prepare for at a national level. These incidents could potentially have an impact on our daily lives. For this reason, there is a need for high levels of preparedness by the emergency services and our communities, including improved ability to operate effectively together. We hold many assets and deliver a response capability to national incidents that may arise in support of this initiative.

To support our local communities, we are members of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum comprises of local Emergency Service Responders (Police, Fire, Ambulance), Local Authorities, as well as associated businesses, organisations and voluntary sector representatives. Through the Local Resilience Forum, these organisations work together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.

Our Chief Fire Officer took the role of Chair of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) in March 2023 and the LRF Partnership Team now work from Service Headquarters. The Resilience Team also hold roles within the LRF such as Chair of the Budget and Assurance Group and key roles within the LRF Workstreams as Lead and Deputy.

For more information on our Local Resilience Forum, please see: www.hampshireprepared.co.uk

As well as supporting our communities prepare for widespread incidents through the Local Resilience Forum, we also have an Island Resilience Forum to focus on specific risks that can affect us and our partner agencies on the Island.

Through this partnership we have a programme of work, which is achieved through engagement with all internal departments and with our partners across the Island.

We must also ensure we have the necessary arrangements in place to maintain our service delivery. Our Service Resilience Team provide the Contingency Planning and Business Continuity for the Service. This programme of work is achieved through engagement with all internal departments and with our partners in the Local Resilience Forum to:

- Identify and assess risk within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.
- Identify mitigation to the risks in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (including Community Resilience).
- Produce individual department, service wide and Multi Agency response plans.
- Undertake a programme of training and exercising at Operational, Tactical and Strategic levels.

This work enables the Service to meet its mission critical activities and still respond to the communities of Hampshire and Isle of Wight during periods of disruption and high demand.

OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

COLLABORATION

We work closely on a daily basis with our blue light colleagues from other fire and rescue, police and ambulance services. We also have excellent relationships with our colleagues in Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council, Southampton City Council, Portsmouth City Council, Isle of Wight Council and other local authorities and agencies across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. We believe that through collaboration we can maximise the benefits of our collective offering to the public and therefore, together we make life safer.

Hampshire borders with Wiltshire, Dorset, Berkshire, Surrey and West Sussex. As incidents arise, we assist other fire and rescue services working across the border and neighbouring fire and rescue services will also assist us. There are agreements in place to either support the neighbouring fire and rescue service resolve an incident or to attend the incident on the other fire and rescue service's behalf.

Furthermore, we have come together with three other fire and rescue services to form a partnership that revolutionises the way the closest resource for an incident is identified and dispatched. Devon & Somerset and Dorset & Wiltshire fire and rescue services joined Hampshire and Isle of Wight to form the Networked Fire Services Partnership (NFSP), which means all the Services use the same technology in their Control centres. This allows us to be able to take 999 calls and mobilise appliances for each other, offering greater resilience and saving millions of pounds across the partnership.

Kent Fire and Rescue Service is also an active partner within the current NFSP and the operational control futures project which is planned for implementation in 2026 will connect the four services enabling each of the partners to support each other, provide resilience, business continuity and disaster recovery and provide operational resilience.

We also deliver a co-responding scheme which launched in 2004 in partnership with South Central Ambulance Service. Co-responders are firefighters with training in basic life support including resuscitation and defibrillation, who attend life critical incidents such as cardiac arrest, anaphylactic shock, strokes and asthma attacks. Supporting our ambulance colleagues in this way helps to provide an immediate response to incidents across the county and relieves the pressure on ambulances. We are the first fire service to hold clinical governance framework for our health-related work, which includes Immediate Emergency Care, Emergency Medical Response and Falls Response.

We also seek to capitalise on our proven ability to reduce deaths and injuries in fires, by applying the same educational and experiential strengths to the road safety agenda as part of a partnership approach. We are proud to be part of the Hampshire Road Safety Partnership, made up of: Hampshire County Council; Portsmouth City Council; Southampton City Council; Hampshire Constabulary; Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service; and Highways England. For more details please see: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service Road Safety

We share many of our premises across these partners but most significantly we share our headquarters with Hampshire Constabulary and some of our other sites with our health partners. By co-locating in this way, we seek further opportunities for closer and generate income (around £1.6 million income from rents, service charges and renewable energy income in 2025/26).

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service's Finance and Procurement functions are delivered by Hampshire Shared Services along with transactional HR and Finance services being provided by the Integrated Business Centre (IBC) element of the Shared Services partnership.

OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

RESPONSE TO NATIONAL INQUIRIES, DEBRIEFS AND OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE AUDITS

In response to Grenfell Phase 1, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) identified 34 tracked recommendations all of which have now been completed.

While formal actions from Grenfell Phase 2 have not yet been assigned by the NFCC, HIWFRS have taken a proactive approach. Anticipated recommendations have been reviewed and provisionally allocated to relevant directorates. As a result, many actions are already confirmed as underway, demonstrating the service's commitment and engagement on this key area.

Assurance for the Manchester Arena Inquiry has been collated, and evidence will be going through a governance cycle during 2025/26.

Corporate dashboard reporting is available internally on the progress the Service has made to specific Grenfell and Manchester Arena Inquiry learning outcomes.

HIWFRS debriefs

Structured debriefs play a vital role in enhancing operational performance by capturing key learning and enabling personnel to reflect on their actions from the initial contact with the fire control room to post-incident actions. During the 2025/26 reporting year, 20 structured debriefs were conducted, each aligned with National Operational Guidance and the specific hazards encountered during incidents.

The debriefs can be categorised as follows:

- Fires – 55%
- Rescues – 20%
- Transport – 10%
- Ops Planning – 10%
- Breathing Apparatus – 5%

Insights from structured debriefs enable us to extract valuable lessons and refine existing procedures, training or equipment and improve safety and effectiveness across HIWFRS.

Operational Assurance Audits

Operational Assurance Audits play a vital role in maintaining high performance and driving improvement. The service has moved away from a traditional broad annual audit covering multiple topics to thematic shorter audits that allow us to focus on specific areas for concern or service need. This targeted approach allows for quicker identification and resolution of issues, ensuring the learning cycle is closed and assurance is delivered efficiently.

During the 2025/26 reporting year, the Operational Assurance team conducted two thematic Operational Assurance Audits based on Premises Risk Information which resulted in amendments to SSRi reports. The second audit focused on Electric Vehicles/Lithium-ion batteries which confirmed crew's knowledge and provided guidance for future exercises.

For 2026/27 we are rolling out a new exercise model to ensure each station trains in a more organisational and locally targeted way.

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ASSURANCE DECLARATION

2025/26 ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT

The Chair of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Combined Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service are satisfied that the Authority's financial, governance and operational assurance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively and meet the requirements detailed within the Fire and Rescue National Framework.



Dr Sabrina Cohen-Hatton KFSM
Chief Fire Officer
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service



Cllr Rhydian Vaughan MBE
Chairman
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Authority


HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE