

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

Annual Performance Assessment 2022-23

Published Autumn 2023



Mae'r cyhoeddiad hwn ar gael yn Gymraeg

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North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

Blazing Trails: A Comprehensive Progress and Self-Assessment Report of Fire and Rescue Excellence

Welcome to North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's progress and self-assessment report for 2022-23.

In March 2021 the Authority published its Corporate Plan 2021-24 which sets out our seven long-term improvement and wellbeing objectives. In October 2021 the Authority confirmed its intention to continue to pursue those same objectives in 2022-23 and in March 2023 the plan was revised.

This assessment report details our progress against the seven improvement and well-being objectives, compliance with the Welsh Language Standards and progress against our Strategic Equality Objectives.

Our mission is to make North Wales a safer place for everyone to live, work and visit across our diverse communities.

2022-23 was a milestone year for us - for the first time since we have kept records, there were zero deaths due to accidental fires in dwellings in North Wales. This is great news, but we must not become complacent and we are committed to working harder still to maintain this level of safety.

We are pleased to report that we have made excellent progress against our objectives and the detail within this document reflects just how busy we have been this year and how much progress we are making in ensuring we provide the best possible service to the people of North Wales.

As always, we welcome your feedback on any suggestions for improving our reporting - our contact details are on page 80.



Chief Fire Officer



Fire Authority Chair

Making North Wales a safer place to live, work and visit

Legal Requirements For Reporting

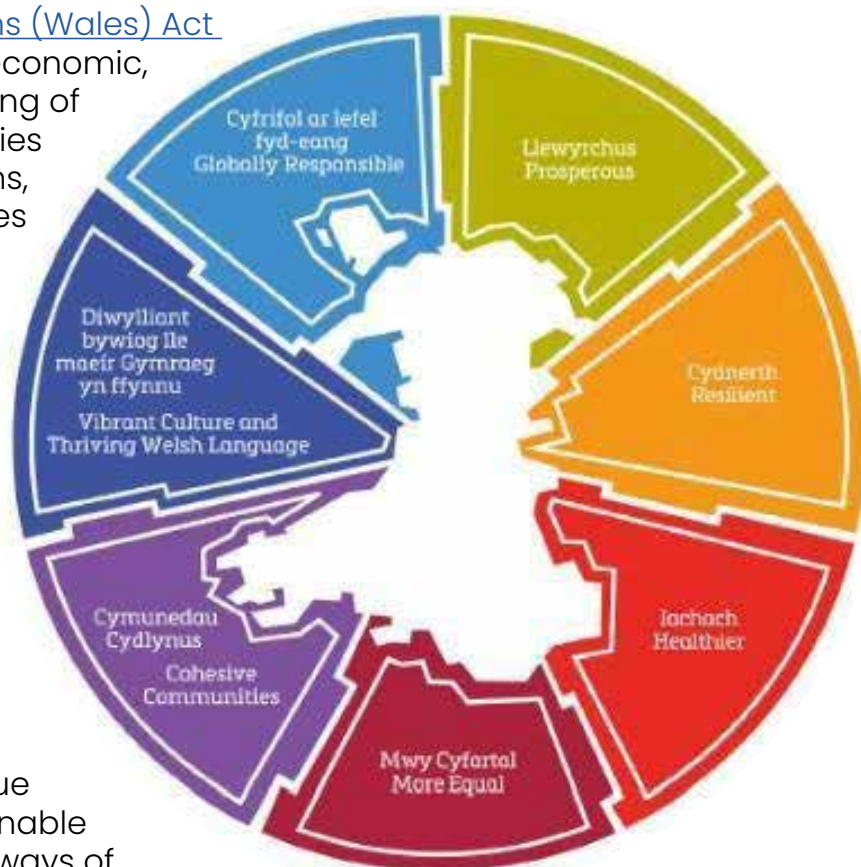
The Authority considers public accountability and transparency to be of vital importance in all aspects of its relationships with local communities, partners and organisations and welcomes the opportunity to publish performance information.

Each year the Authority is required to publish an assessment of its performance in accordance with the legislation below:






The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)

is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Its aim is to make public bodies think more about the long-term aims, work better with people, communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach. The Act requires the Authority to set and publish well-being objectives. These long-term objectives are improvements that the Authority wants to help bring about in North Wales, that will contribute to improving local well-being and to moving Wales closer to achieving its well-being goals.

Having identified these long-term objectives, the Authority has a duty to take all reasonable steps to pursue them in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle and the five ways of working (listed below), and to publish a progress report after the end of each financial year.



The five ways of working:

-  Balancing short term needs with long term needs.
-  Preventing problems from occurring or getting worse.
-  Taking an integrated approach, balancing social, economic and environmental needs.
-  Remembering the rich diversity of people in North Wales and encouraging them to get involved in decisions that affect them.
-  Collaborative working to meet the well-being objectives.

¹ [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 – The Essentials](#)

Fire and rescue authorities in Wales are also classed as 'Welsh Improvement Authorities' and are subject to the requirements of the Local Government Measure 2009. They therefore must follow an annual process of setting and achieving local improvement objectives.

In addition to the duties placed on individual public bodies, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 also requires each local authority area to form a Public Services Board (PSB).

With regard to the area covered by North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, three Public Services Boards have been established:

- Anglesey and Gwynedd.
- Conwy and Denbighshire.
- Flintshire and Wrexham (merged 1st January 2023).

Each Public Services Board published a 'Well-being Plan' to identify its priorities, and how it is working to achieve those priorities in its area.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 includes a public sector equality duty that requires public sector bodies, in the exercise of their functions to have due regard for the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.



Equality Act 2010

Welsh Language Standards 2016

The Welsh Language Commissioner issued fire and rescue authorities with their Compliance Notices on 30 September 2016. This document lists which of the Welsh Language Standards (as listed in full in the Welsh Language Standards Regulations (No.5); 2016) an organisation must comply with, along with any exemptions and their implementation dates.

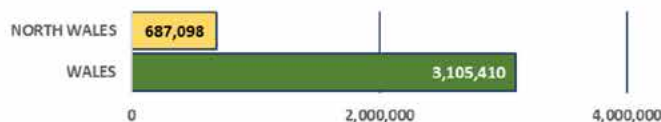


Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

About North Wales

Knowing about North Wales today helps the Authority plan to make positive changes for the future.

Population

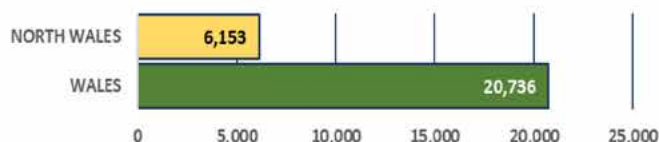


22.1%

of Wales

[Source: Welsh Government](#)

Area KM2

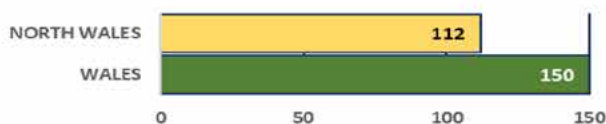


29.7%

of Wales

[Source: Welsh Government](#)

Population Density

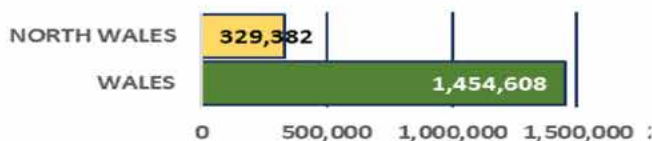


112

The Welsh average is 150

[Source: Welsh Government](#)

Dwellings

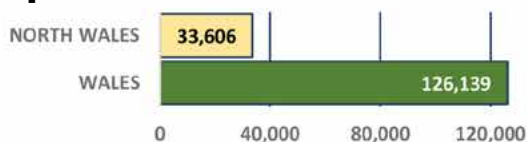


22.6%

of Wales

[Source: Welsh Government](#)

Non-Domestic Properties

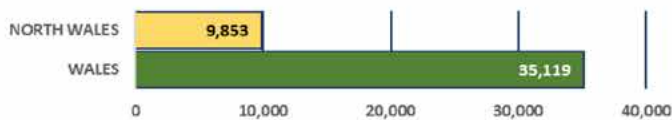


26.6%

of Wales

[Source: Welsh Government](#)

Road Length KM

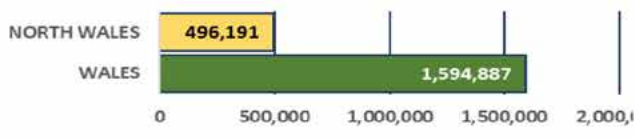


28.1%

of Wales

[Source: Welsh Government](#)

Agricultural Area KM2

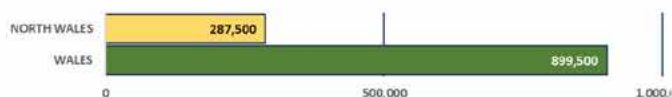


31.1%

of Wales

[Source: Welsh Government](#)

Welsh Speakers



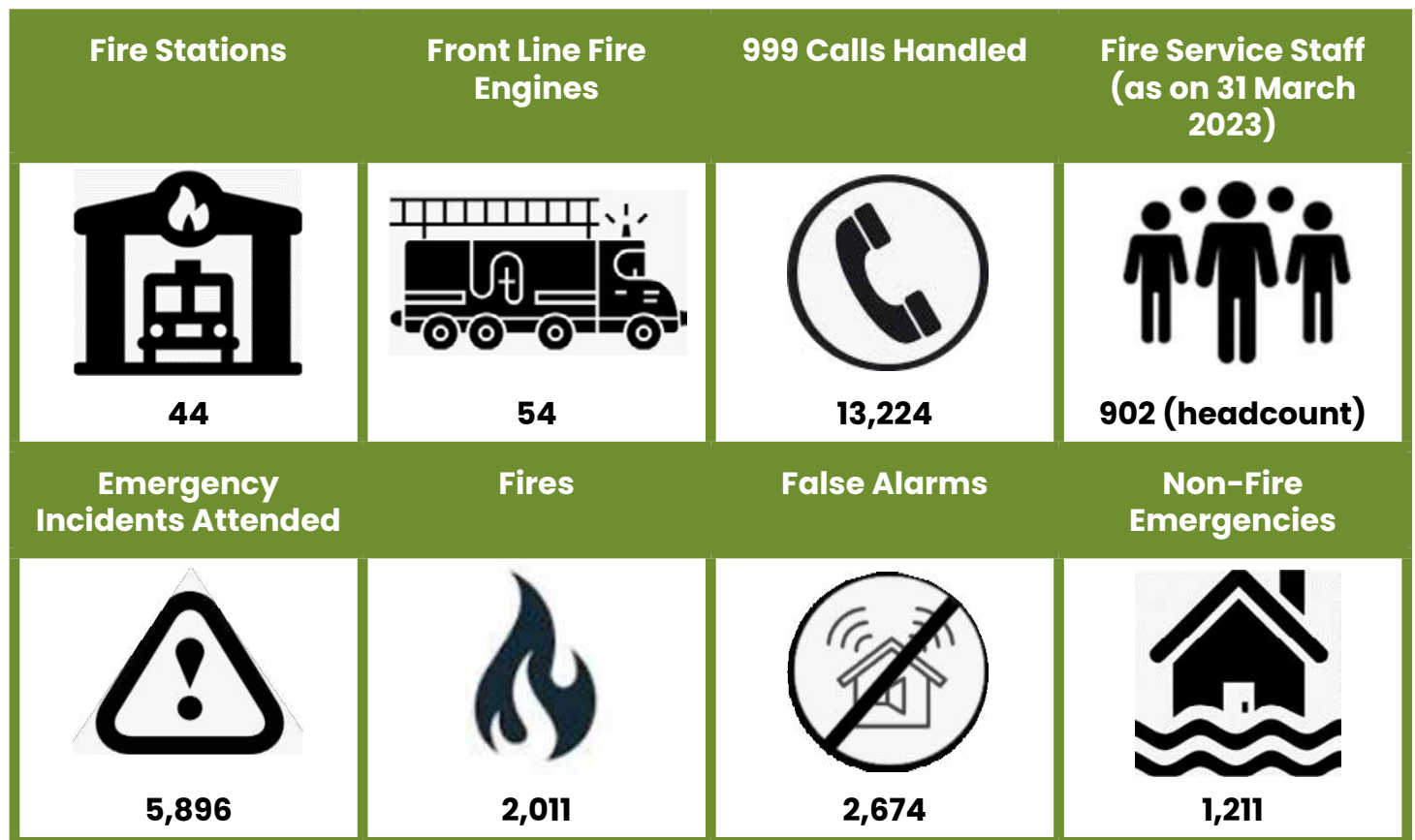
31.9%

of Wales

[Source: Welsh Government](#)

About North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

Below is a summary of the Authority's resources and activity levels during 2022-23.



What are our current shift patterns?

Our retained duty or on-call (part-time) firefighters are mainly based in rural fire stations located across our region. They are required to be live within five minutes of their fire station (although this can be extended on a case by case basis) and to carry an alerter so as to be able to respond to emergencies, as well as attend drill nights once a week for training sessions and other pre-arranged duties.

Our day-crewed firefighters are full-time firefighters located at Colwyn Bay, Llandudno, Bangor, Caernarfon and Holyhead. The day-crewing shift system requires our crews to work a combination of hours on station during the day and to remain on-call from a base location overnight in order to provide a 24-hour response. There are also on-call firefighters based at these fire stations.

Our wholetime or full-time firefighters are located at Wrexham, Deeside and Rhyl. Crews at these stations work shifts from the station at night and during the day so as to provide a 24-hour response. In addition, there are also on-call firefighters based at these fire stations.

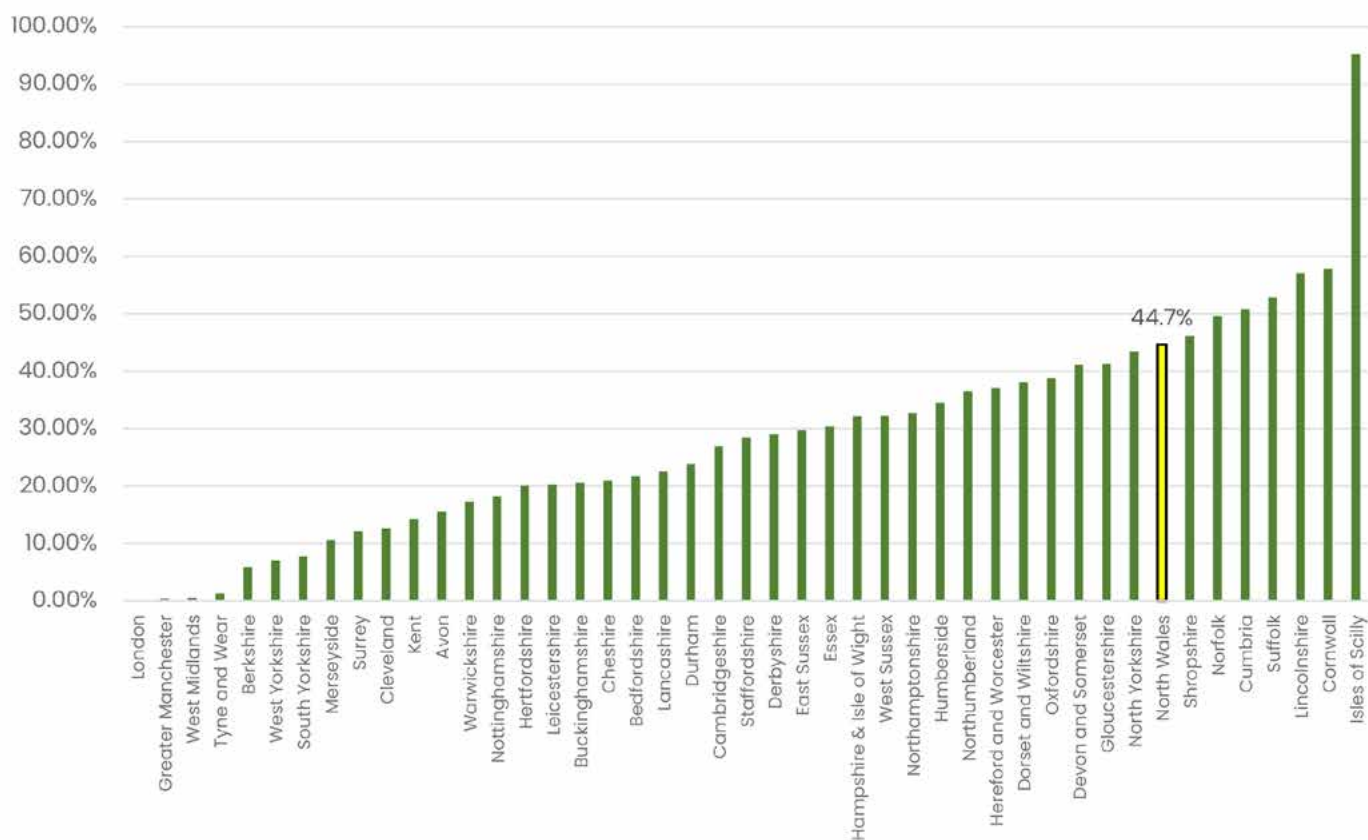
Wholetime rural firefighters also work full-time and work 12-hour day shifts covering the region on a dynamic basis, depending on demand.

Staffing

As on 31 March 2023	Full time equivalent strength	Headcount of individual staff
Wholetime Operational (WDS)	279.00	280
Retained Operational (RDS/on-call)	365.25	452
Corporate Services	135.58	139
Control	30.71	31
Totals	810.54	902

Nearly half of the personnel employed by the Authority are categorised as on-call firefighters; this is one of the highest proportions when compared with fire and rescue authorities in England.

The bar chart below shows the total number of on-call firefighter (by strength) as a percentage of the total workforce across fire and rescue authorities in England and North Wales.



Data as at the 31st March 2022.

Source: [Fire statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fire-statistics-data-tables)

What is Expected of the Fire Authority

Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales

Fire Prevention	must arrange for fire safety to be promoted in their area. This would include informing people about fire prevention and advising them how best to react if a fire does break out.
Fire Safety Enforcement	have a duty to enforce fire safety in non-domestic premises, for example, hotels, schools, shops and offices. This duty includes exercising powers to issue alteration, enforcement and even prohibition notices if they find that fire safety arrangements in premises are unsatisfactory.
Emergency Response	must make arrangements for receiving 999 calls and for sending trained and equipped personnel to extinguish fires and protect life and property at those fires. They must also make arrangements for rescuing people from road traffic collisions and for protecting them from serious harm.
Planning for and Responding to Other Emergencies	must make arrangements for the mass decontamination of people after chemical, biological or radio-active incidents, and for rescuing people from trains, aircrafts and collapsed buildings. They must also be prepared to assist with large-scale emergencies (including terrorist attacks) elsewhere in the UK. As 'Category 1' responders under the Civil Contingencies Act, fire and rescue authorities also have duties relating to large-scale events that threaten serious damage to the welfare of people, wildlife, the environment and primary supply chains.
Flooding and Inland Water Emergencies	must make arrangements to respond to incidents of flooding or water rescue which pose a direct threat of death or injury.
Equalities	must work towards eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people with different protected characteristics.
Welsh language	treat the Welsh and English languages equally, promoting the use of Welsh and complying with defined Welsh language standards.
Continuous Improvement	must set objectives continuously to improve what they do, and publish information about their improvement and performance.
Future Planning	must work towards improving people's social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being as well as working in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the needs of future generations.

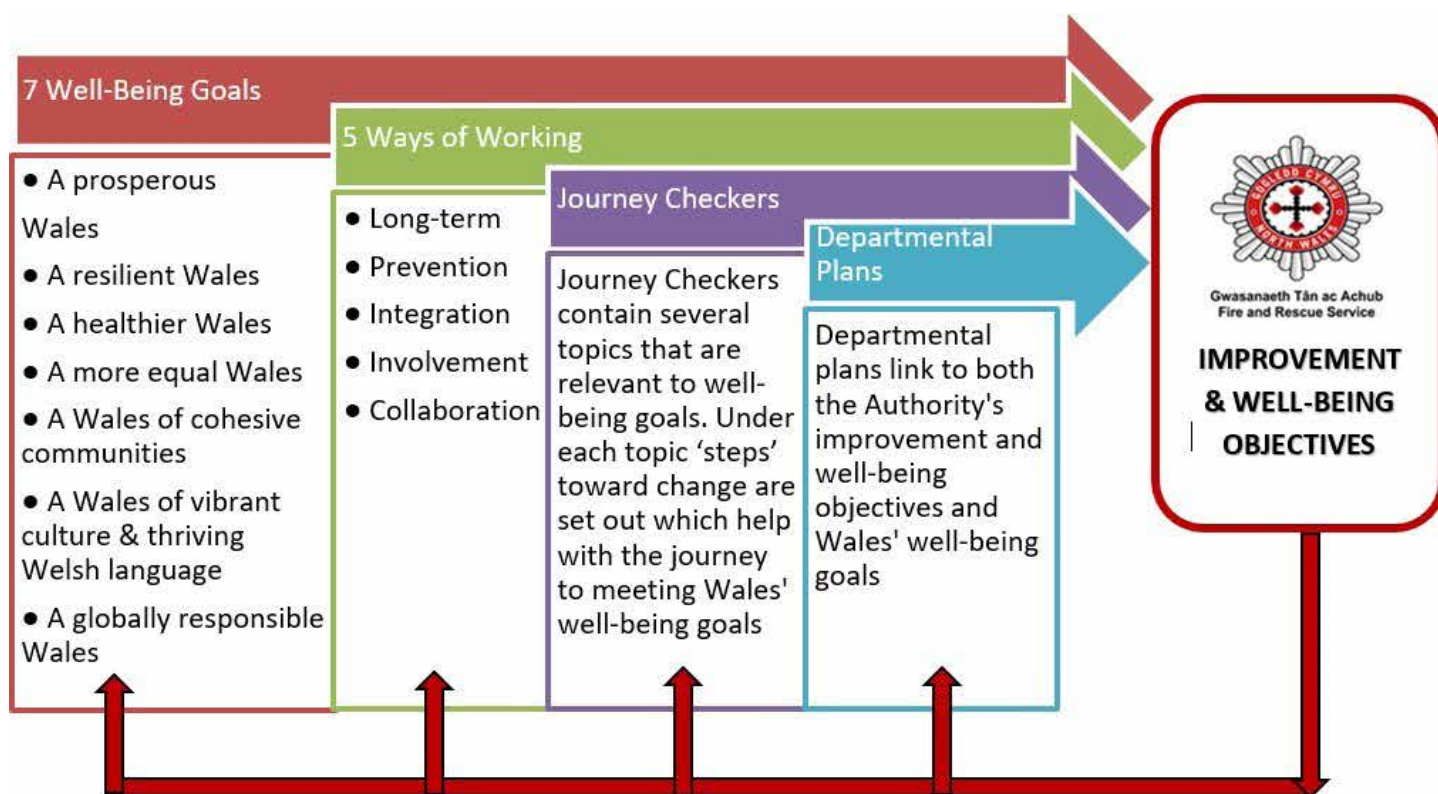
Please see page 75 for sources of legislation.

Progress Against Improvement and Well-being Objectives

This section describes the progress the Authority made towards meeting its long-term improvement and well-being objectives during 2022-23. The Authority is required to publish this assessment of its own performance for 2022-23 and the statutory performance indicators for the same year by 31st October 2023.

In 2018-19 the Authority increased the number of objectives that it was pursuing in order better to comply with section 3(2) (a) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, which states that a public body must set and publish objectives "...that are designed to maximise its contribution to achieving each of the well-being goals".

Using a variety of resources on the Commissioner's website such as 'journey checkers', a new set of objectives was developed in accordance with the sustainable development that helped to identify opportunities for the Authority to improve its contribution to Wales' well-being goals.



During 2022-23 work was undertaken to ensure the well-being objectives are embedded throughout all departmental plans where applicable. This work was further underpinned by the development of a set of 'Building Blocks' which are a set of measures to support both the well-being objectives and the departmental objectives.

The Annual Governance Statement for 2022-23 is currently awaiting approval from the Authority and it provides an overview of the governance arrangements as well as confirming a work plan for 2023-24.

Once approved and published, performance against the forward work plan will be monitored through the Service Leadership Team's Performance Board.

Objective 1: To work towards making improvements to the health, safety and well-being of people in North Wales

Well-being goals met:



A range of factors can place people at an increased risk of accidental fires in the home, for example their age (young children and older adults), having a disability or a limiting medical condition, being alone at the time of the fire, and being affected by alcohol and / or drugs.

Individuals and communities who know how to prevent fires and stay safe when they do occur will not only be safer and healthier, but also economically, socially and culturally more resilient. The polluting effect of fires contributes to a less healthy environment, which in turn deters people from outdoor activities and can negatively impact upon physical and mental well-being. Throughout 2022-23, the Authority continued to focus its efforts on helping people stay safe, whether at home, in work, on the roads, or out in the community.

Action 1: support people to prevent accidental dwelling fires and stay safe if they do occur.

During the year, we attended 344 accidental dwelling fires, at which 23 people sustained slight injuries and a further three required overnight treatment at a hospital, and there were no fire fatalities recorded.

Control call handlers provided lifesaving advice during 999 calls while trying to keep the residents calm and focused on their escape. This advice proved invaluable during a call to a house fire in Denbighshire while five fire engines were being mobilised, our Control staff remained on the phone giving lifesaving advice and constant reassurance. In total, 12 people safely exited the burning building, with four being rescued by firefighters, and all of the occupants only suffered minor smoke inhalation. Following a fire investigation, the cause was believed to be a build-up of fat residue in a cooking appliance.

A Campaign Steering Group made up of representatives from around the Service works in conjunction with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to create and respond to both locally targeted and national prevention campaigns, for example:

- Older Persons day
- No Smoking day
- Deaf Awareness week

Fire safety staff also attended local and national events, such as the National Eisteddfod to promote our prevention and protection work, including our 'You Can Save a Life Campaign' to encourage people to look out for others in an effort to help prevent accidental dwelling fires.

Action 2: delivering 20,000 Safe and Well Checks in either English or Welsh with at least 25% of those being delivered to households referred to the Service by another agency.

A total of 18,052 Safe and Well Checks (SAWCs) were completed during the year, with 32% undertaken in response to a referral from a partner agency; just over a third of all SAWCs completed were classed as high priority.

During the year, the Service commenced an ambitious process of re-contacting occupiers for whom we had previously conducted a 'High Priority' SAWC, as far back as 2019–2020. Operational fire crews were given the contact detail in phases, dealing with each year in turn. We aim to complete this process by April 2024, following which the re-engagement calls will continue year-on-year and will become business as usual. This excludes referrals made following either a 'threat to burn' or due to domestic violence, for obvious safety reasons.

Bespoke interventions continued to be provided to the most vulnerable in the community, and this included fitting innovative equipment such as Stoveguards; this is a piece of equipment that cuts the power to the cooker to prevent a fire by sensing heat or a combination of heat and cooking fumes.

One of our many fire safety engagement initiatives this year included promoting our new text number 07507 303678, which coincided with 'Older People's Day' as an alternative way for people to register a request for a Safe and Well Check.

Safe and Well Checks are promoted regularly via our website, through leaflets, and on our social media through the #TestItTuesday campaign. The opportunity to receive these checks bilingually is also promoted to our communities.

A Campaign Steering Group made up of representatives from around the Service works to promote campaigns aimed at maintaining public safety as well as to publicise our prevention and protection work – this includes promoting safe and well checks and campaigns to raise awareness of helping those who are more vulnerable to stay safe and to maintain smoke alarm ownership.

Action 3: support other agencies in reducing the number of road traffic collisions and associated deaths and injuries.

A total of 234 road traffic collisions (RTCs) were attended during the year.

A month prior to promoting 'Operation Darwin', a campaign working with partners to reduce the risk of motorcycle-related deaths and serious injuries, we attended a serious RTC near Llanrwst; this incident involved two motorcyclists, one of whom died a week after the incident, while the other suffered life changing injuries. The campaign focused on popular bike routes in Wales and was aimed at breaking down barriers with motorcyclists through engagement and discussion.

We worked in partnership with other organisations including other fire and rescue services in Wales to promote road safety and to raise awareness of the main causes of fatal RTCs. The 'Fatal Five' message focused on 'Don't drink and drive, Kill your speed, Don't get careless, Belt up, and Switch off your mobile phone'. One example of this work involved the

launch of a powerful road safety film in 2022 telling the story of a young girl who was killed in a road traffic collision in North Wales.

'Olivia's Story', an educational film, is about a young person who was tragically killed in an RTC; this was delivered at a special event in Ruthin at which its powerful road safety message was shared with the local community for the first time. This story then subsequently featured as part of the BBC1's 'One Show' and has been used by our prevention educationalists and staff in schools and colleges to promote road safety. This safety message has now been delivered to over 2,500 young people; we have taken the lead to deliver this to all colleges, while North Wales Police will address all secondary schools within our Service area.

Olivia's Story has been used to help educate drivers about the potentially fatal consequences of speeding or not paying attention while driving – this is particularly important for younger drivers as it is well- documented that drivers aged 16-24 are disproportionately more likely to be casualties in road traffic collisions.

In recognition of the success of Olivia's Story, staff will be attending the Houses of Parliament at Westminster in July 2023, when Olivia's mother and an MP will be encouraging young people to have 'black boxes' fitted in their cars to help prevent future accidents thanks to improved driver awareness.

Action 4: embed safeguarding practices into day-to-day activities and these are aligned with national policy and guidance.

We continue to ensure legislative compliance and the number of appropriate safeguarding referrals increased, while the content of information within referrals improved. In addition, a review of staff training was undertaken to identify which staff members needed instruction at Levels three and four and coaching is being planned for those identified.

As we continue to refer adults and children to local authority safeguarding teams, we have seen an ongoing increase in the number of referrals made for both adults and children; the continued training and awareness of NWFERS staff is contributing to this growth.

The Serious Violence Duty (SVD) will soon be enacted in law, and the Service is a 'specified authority' with a duty to assist in the reduction of Serious Violence in North Wales.

From the 1st December 2022, new legislation was introduced to ensure that a hard-wired and working smoke alarm is fitted to the ceiling of each storey in all rented properties. While this is the responsibility of the landlord, we have provided guidance on the most appropriate type of alarm for the property.

A referral system has been developed across Wales to refer landlords to Rent Smart Wales, who will then contact the relevant local authority so as to ensure compliance.

Action 5: continue to develop and deliver interventions and engagement with children and young people through targeted activities.

We continued to deliver Phoenix courses across North Wales; these courses (for young

people aged between 11 and 25) are designed to encourage not only community spirit and personal development (for example confidence, teamwork and trust) but also road and home fire safety awareness through vocational activities.

Our educationalists continued with face-to-face engagement sessions for young people, visiting the majority of primary and secondary schools in North Wales. Over the year, our educationalists delivered potentially lifesaving fire safety advice to over 18,000 school children.

An all-Wales collaborative project called Staywise is due to be finalised during May 2023. This will be the culmination of years of preparatory work to bring the project to fruition; a newly-built website will offer downloadable resources to schools, teachers and young people, and will be committed to saving lives through education.

We continued to deliver regular Fire Cadet programmes each week across North Wales; the Fire Cadets is an educational youth organisation scheme run by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service in partnership with the National Fire Chiefs Council. The aim of the scheme is to create safer, stronger communities through the development of an individual's knowledge and awareness of their community so as to enhance their citizenship skills. Whilst the number of Fire Cadet units declined due to Covid-19, it is pleasing to see interest increasing, with a new unit opening in 2023 at Bala Fire Station.

We maintained our annual involvement with the 'Be a Nice Guy' (BANG) campaign, working alongside North Wales Police in requesting people to consider how they celebrate Halloween. There was a focus on reminding parents to protect their children from the fire risk posed by some fancy-dress costumes.

Action 6: work with organisations that support vulnerable people.

The Service has three dedicated Partnership Managers across the Service who proactively foster and develop working relationships with partner agencies to assist and identify the most vulnerable people in the communities of North Wales, such as those suffering with dementia, older people and those generally more at risk of a fire in the home. Often, when required, a data-sharing agreement is set up to formalise and explain the exchange of information between the two agencies. Where two-way sharing of information is required (i.e. the partner agency requires a response), we then need to set up a far more in-depth agreement called an Information Sharing Protocol (ISP).

One such example is to support the ongoing agreement with the British Red Cross (BRC) in relation to its 'Prepare, Respond, Recover' assistance programme; the agreement allows the BRC to provide aid in the form of practical and emotional support to individuals affected by emergency incidents. This year we have seen a second vehicle located in the Eastern area of the Service in order to further enhance support to the communities of North Wales.

Action 7: implement the latest technological advancements and upgrades to enhance efficiency, accuracy and safety.

The continued implementation of Microsoft 365 has seen the migration of data away from our data centre and into the cloud, bringing efficiencies in data centre energy

consumption. This data has also therefore become more accessible to staff on the move, immediately improving efficiencies and, by making safety information available in this manner, enhancing public safety. Microsoft 365 brings security benefits through the introduction of multi-factor authentication and the movement of our critical websites under this authentication wrapper has improved our security stance.

Further data centre power consumption reductions have been made by replacing equipment with modern and more power-efficient technology, as well as by consolidating services on dedicated devices onto a single platform.

The replacement of our mobile data terminal technologies (an electronic smart tablet installed on fire engines) has resulted in lower electrical and fuel demands to support the equipment, together with improvements that dramatically reduce the time spent physically and virtually supporting these devices. The software hosted on these devices has also been refreshed, which makes access to risk and safety information faster to access and more up-to-date.

Finally, the removal of desk-based phone systems and the migration of most of our voice services to cloud-supported soft phones has improved staff efficiency through the agile working policy, as well as bringing significant cost benefits.

Action 8: implement the findings of the Grenfell Tower fire inquiry and review to mitigate the risk of such a tragedy occurring in North Wales.

The Welsh Government started the process of legislating for changes brought about by the Grenfell Tower fire which occurred on the 14th June 2017, with the instigation of high level groups to look at the challenges identified in its white paper. We are able to influence this via an All-Wales working group by continuing to respond to consultations which relate to changes required in addition to those that will be introduced via the process described above. The consultations are wide-ranging and will have a major impact in all aspects of fire safety.

We have also responded informally to the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor and Inspector for Wales, about the proposal not to enact all of the fire safety changes required by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

We continue to support premises throughout North Wales in their efforts to reduce the fire risks that are present; this is done by education, auditing and formal notices.

Action 9: introduce more eco-friendly electric vehicles to promote better air quality whilst reducing carbon emissions.

We were awarded a capital grant from the Welsh Government for the installation of 34 electric vehicle chargers in 22 locations around the Service area. This will support our growing electric fleet, and we are examining the feasibility of allowing staff and partner agencies to access our charging network while recovering costs.

This investment also means that we are well-positioned to increase our electric vehicle fleet in the future, as we are now committed to ending our purchase of petrol- and diesel-fueled cars and vans from the beginning of 2025.

Action 10: delivering against the strategy for replacing the command and control system, due in 2022–2026. This will ensure that the latest technology is utilised to make the best use of Service resources in emergency response.

The Service migrated to the existing mobilising System in March 2017, undertaking a five-year contract with an optional two-year extension. Due to a staffing shortfall, it was agreed to suspend this project for a period of 12 months and to extend the existing contract. However, work was undertaken to secure agreements directly with the main supplier which will ensure that, when we do go out to tender, any possible companies must have compatible platforms with them as well as meeting our specific requirements.

Action 11: promoting health and well-being awareness events for Service staff and running health and fitness awareness sessions for potential recruits.

The Health, Fitness, and Wellbeing team plays a crucial role in promoting good health practices throughout our organisation. They regularly share healthy recipes as well as easy-to-follow workouts, and raise awareness of health and well-being campaigns including 'Time to Talk' day, 'Mental Health Awareness' week, and 'World Suicide Prevention' day. Their approach encompasses an holistic focus on nutrition, exercise, sleep, hydration, posture, alcohol intake, medication, smoking, and other factors that impact physical and mental well-being.

Throughout the year, the team delivered activities to promote health, fitness and wellbeing; these included a Step Competition, a Menopause discussion group, an Ultimate Fireground Challenge, a Parkinson's support group meeting, and an Alzheimer's Dementia walk. These initiatives aimed to engage employees, raise awareness, and encourage participation in physical activities.

Changes have also been made to our Annual Health and Fitness Reviews, with a person-focused approach that emphasises privacy, confidentiality, and tailored advice. We have developed bespoke exercise programs and supporting resources that cater to individual employees' goals and needs. Pre-recorded fitness videos which are available on our YouTube channel offer convenient and accessible workout options. We promote physical activities through local well-being walks and collaborations with various organisations.

We have established a new Parenting and Carers Staff Network to connect colleagues and to provide guidance and support to staff members who are parents or carers. Many staff members have expressed interest in coming together to share advice and address challenges associated with parenting and caring responsibilities. The network meets regularly with the intention to organise social activities, and acts as a working group to support our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The Network is intended to identify relevant support and guidance to assist staff in navigating their roles as parents and carers, fostering a supportive community within the Service.

In 2022, the Health, Fitness and Wellbeing team ran "Get Fire Fit" sessions across North Wales. These days allowed potential recruits from minority groups to understand the physical demands of being a firefighter, the importance of a healthy lifestyle and maintaining fitness levels. Recruits were also given a chance undertake some field testing

to assess if they had the requirements to be successful through the physical selection or indicate if they had a weakness in a particular area. All participants then undertook a group training session with a fitness adviser.

The team have been active on the "Get Fire Fit" Facebook page which allows recruits the opportunity to have access to online materials, details of open days, and information on which areas we are currently recruiting. The general public can also access exercises through the Health, Fitness and Wellbeing channel on 'YouTube'.

The team have also been active in the community promoting recruitment, having discussions about lifestyle with members of the public and providing the chance to have a go at some activities. At the Colwyn Bay Fire Station open day and Pride events a fitness competition was set up for both children and adults, fun for the whole family to enjoy, whilst also measuring blood pressure and body composition for those who wanted lifestyle advice. Other events with similar offerings include open days in St Asaph, Chirk, Corwen, Llangefni, Tywyn; 999 day in Wrexham in 2022; Health and exercise advice at monthly LGBTQ+ meeting in Mind Rhyl.

Our approach to promoting health and well-being through awareness events, welfare support, tailored reviews, and physical activities demonstrates our commitment to maintaining a fit and healthy workforce. We remain dedicated to fostering a culture of well-being and to providing the necessary resources and support to our staff.

Action 12: rolling out Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) refresher training to all staff, with enhanced training for frontline community safety staff.

We continue to train and develop our staff in line with the Welsh Government VAWDASV Training Framework; this ensures that the most appropriate training is matched to staff in various roles across the organisation, thus ensuring that they are equipped with the right knowledge and skills to make a difference.

We continue to support Welsh Women's Aid and their partners, Thrive Women's Aid, Threshold DAS, Swansea Women's Aid, DASU, Safer Wales, West Wales DAS, RASAC and Bawso in their endeavours to continue delivering Ask & Act training until March 2025. We have engaged with these partners to support the development of training content for continuation training, as well as providing training for new staff of relevant organisations.

On White Ribbon Day, our staff demonstrated their support by participating in a video shared on our social media channels. Additionally, our staff attended the 'All for One' conference in Llandudno Junction, an important event bringing together agencies and organisations to address domestic violence and modern slavery in North Wales. Our staff have been encouraged to become White Ribbon Ambassadors or Champions, actively working to combat male violence against women and to promote equality and respect. The coinciding of White Ribbon Day with the start of the FIFA men's World Cup highlights the collective effort to end violence against women and girls. By engaging on social media and promoting this crucial cause, we contribute to the creation of safer communities for everyone.

Objective 2: To continue to work collaboratively to help communities improve their resilience

Well-being goals met:



Working with local communities is extremely important to improve safety and to help communities become more resilient. The Authority worked closely with partner agencies throughout 2022-23 around targeted areas in order to assist communities and local businesses with pre-planning and education, enabling them to become more resilient in emergencies.

The risks faced by communities are ongoing, and the Authority remained committed in 2022-23 to working with and supporting people to become more resilient. Working in close collaboration with partners, the Authority continued to ensure that a joined-up message was communicated, not only about safety but also with regard to a range of other initiatives designed to improve the well-being of the whole community.

Action 1: work with partners and stakeholders such as Natural Resources Wales and farmers / graziers, to identify locations in North Wales which are at greater risk of outdoor / grassland fires and help to develop emergency response plans.

During the summer, staff worked closely with Natural Resources Wales, North Wales Police and local authorities on Llantysilio and Ruabon mountains to engage with visitors so as to help prevent and reduce incident attendance during the hot weather, and to raise awareness of the damage that wildfires can cause to the upland landscape. This fire safety work included working alongside Denbighshire Rangers in identifying high risk areas.

In November 2022, the Welsh fire and rescue services, led by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service and in collaboration with Denbighshire County Council, launched a new video at the Royal Welsh showground in Builth Wells to provide a step-by-step guide to landowners on how safely to conduct a controlled burn, with the aim of educating landowners and helping to drive down wildfires resulting from irresponsible controlled burning.

Wildfire has now been officially recognised as a major hazard in the United Kingdom, with its inclusion in the National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies.

Action 2: continue to contribute to the development of a multi-agency regional wildfire plan.

A multi-agency wildfire helicopter training event was held at Caernarfon Airport to demonstrate the capabilities of using a helicopter; this included topping up its bucket from behind a nearby dam. This has enhanced our access to water when dealing with wildfires.

The Service is also part of a multi-agency group collaborating with a local company 'Darlun TV' in the production of a TV series called 'Snowdonia SOS' which will air next year. This opportunity will assist the Service in promoting fire safety messages, and will highlight partnership working as well as taking a retrospective look at challenges concerning wildfires and on-call firefighter recruitment.

We continued to work with strategic partners, farming communities and landowners to reduce wildfire incidents across the region. The UK and North Wales were subject to an unprecedented hot summer coupled with drought, during which temperatures in some parts of the UK exceeded 40 degrees Celsius. As a result, there was an increase to 35 wildfires during the year which were attended by a combined total of 108 vehicles for over 646 hours.

The Service collaborated with the other Welsh Fire and Rescue Services to create the Wales Wildfire Board (WWB), and has already drafted an All-Wales Wildfire Charter. The Board has key strategic partners including Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government, the Met Office and the Welsh Police Services who work with landowners, farmers and land managers to help reduce wildfires nationally and locally. We continue to attend farmers markets, and use media messaging and videos on numerous social media platforms with the aim to raise awareness and education for farmers and landowners alike.

The three fire and rescue services in Wales launched a new video at the Winter Fair in Builth Wells in December which provides a step-by-step guide for landowners on how safely to conduct a controlled burn. Every year in Wales, fire is responsible for damaging thousands of hectares of countryside, open space and wildlife habitats. Fire crews across Wales want to continue to work with local communities, farmers and landowners to protect our precious Welsh landscape.

Action 3: build relationships with partners such as Natural Resources Wales, Local Resilience Forums, the Joint Emergency Services Group (JESG) and inland flood and water rescue groups to improve the joint capabilities of agencies to help those affected by flooding.

Six members of staff from across the Service successfully completed a training course based in Glasgow which looked at rescue techniques from submerged vehicles. The course provided our Training Instructors with a real insight into new techniques, with hands-on experience in challenging water temperatures.

The North Wales Warning and Informing Group provides an excellent opportunity for professionals to communicate and work together across Local Resilience Forum organisations; this helps each party to promote the other's messages, and to warn and inform the public in times of emergencies such as flooding etc.

The Technical Operations Department purchased underwater cameras and reach poles for all water incident units. This follows the receipt of an action note from the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) National Operational Learning User Group that relates to firefighters putting themselves at risk by attempting to search sub-surface without the necessary equipment and qualifications. This equipment will greatly enhance firefighter safety as we move forwards.

Action 4: work collaboratively with communities and retained firefighters to enhance resilience of fire cover in their areas.

Staff attended, and participated in local park runs and other fitness events to help to promote firefighter recruitment; park runs attended included those held at Penrhyn Castle, Bangor, Wepre Park, Deeside, Conwy, Newborough Forest, Anglesey and Erddig, Wrexham.

In addition to the full-time firefighter recruitment window in April 2022, on-call firefighter opportunities continued to be advertised throughout the year. Taster Days were held at Rhyl Fire Station to raise awareness of the opportunities available; these were open to identified under-represented groups within the Service which currently include women and people from LGBTQ+, black and ethnic minority groups. The recruitment team in each area targeted key fire station areas to look at encouraging suitable applications from a range of candidates so as to enhance the resilience of the fire cover in that particular area.

On-call firefighter opportunities are promoted regularly through the Service website and on social media throughout the year, highlighting what it is like to be an on-call firefighter, how people can help protect their communities, and the important contribution of local employers in allowing their staff to act as on-call firefighters.

Action 5: introduce Microsoft 365 as a means of further improving communication and integration with partners.

All users have successfully been migrated to the cloud version of Microsoft 365, and ICT security has increased with the introduction of Multi-factor Authentication (MFA), allowing users to access work systems via their personal devices. Multimodal training has been offered to all staff currently using MS Teams in order to support a smooth transition to the new software.

Work is ongoing to create a user-friendly Service intranet that will also be accessible for staff working from home or away from the office; it will include quick reference information pages relating to Health, Safety and Employee Well-being.

The Service has also been working on launching a new intranet for staff which will help to improve communications across all areas of the Services and all duty systems. The new intranet will be launched in July 2023.

Objective 3: To operate as effectively and efficiently as possible, making the best use of resources available

Well-being goals met:



Given the backdrop of financial uncertainty, the cost of living crisis, rising inflation and the potential increase in demand for services across the public sector, it is inevitable that the Authority will be faced with challenges in being able to sustain its services over the coming decades. The pressure on fire and rescue services is likely to come from several different directions, including the ability to recruit and retain sufficient on-call firefighters.

The Authority has embarked on a number of reviews to support the Service in operating as efficiently and as effectively as possible; one such review will be the 'Emergency Cover Review' which will be out for public consultation during 2023-24.

Action 1: deliver fire and rescue services in North Wales within the agreed budget.

The Authority remained committed to playing its part in building stronger and safer communities. It recognises that it requires flexibility and innovation to prepare for future financial challenges, whilst being able to sustain service delivery.

The initial planning assessment for 2022-23 identified a net budget requirement of £39.41m, compared to £37.07m for 2021-22; had been developed on the basis of current Service provision, whilst being mindful of the need to keep the increase to constituent authorities as low as possible. In November 2021, members of the Fire Authority reflected on some key challenges that had been highlighted through the new Chief Fire Officer's situational assessment, and the consequences for the Authority's budget. The revenue budget subsequently approved in January 2022 included an increase of £1.13m to address those challenges.

In order to sustain service delivery, several reviews were undertaken during 2022-23 including a wildfire review, a retained duty system review; the Emergency Cover Review commenced and is still ongoing.

Action 2: continue to pursue ongoing internal efficiencies.

Various cost-saving efficiencies were implemented during 2022-23 which included:

- Continuing the implementation of energy efficiency measures in order to save energy long-term.
- Increasing the number of electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles in the fleet to reduce fuel usage and promote sustainability for the future.
- Continuing to review the use of ICT systems. For example, staff now receive electronic payslips instead of paper versions that were posted to their home addresses, the use of Microsoft Teams for meetings and phone calls.

As well as ensuring the careful management of its revenue budget, the Authority continued to scrutinise its capital programme in order to make sure that best value was achieved. The Authority remained committed to ensuring that its assets are utilised efficiently and effectively, and it continued to analyse the capital programme against possible negative revenue implications.

Action 3: monitor the progress of the reintegration of financial services previously outsourced to Conwy County Borough Council.

All financial services were successfully reintegrated during April 2022, along with the implementation of the new financials system; this involved the restructuring of the Finance and Procurement Department in order to meet the increased workload. As is the case with other public bodies in the North Wales area, it has proved difficult to attract candidates for the specialist posts required, and recruitment is ongoing.

Action 4: build on existing measures to monitor operational performance by fire crews before, during and after incidents.

The operational assurance of fire crews is undertaken by the first attending flexi-duty manager (a type of working rota staffed by operational personnel) and each operational assurance generates a return which is analysed by the operational assurance team. Trends and issues identified are addressed appropriately so as to ensure that the Service continues to improve. The operational assurance team monitors incidents remotely as well, to ensure that the standard of messages and the handling of other related issues is appropriate. A range of debriefs occurs after incidents, including an initial hot brief at the conclusion of the incident. A structured debrief will occur for larger incidents and will involve key Service personnel to identify areas of good practice and areas for potential improvement. Larger incidents involving partner agencies will result in a multi-agency debrief facilitated by the Local Resilience Forum, and these will focus on the importance of inter-agency working and whether the JESIP principles have been applied correctly. Any issues identified are addressed accordingly.

Action 5: develop a more flexible model for the delivery of training and development, including providing training more locally to support the needs of retained / on-call firefighters.

The Training and Development Team reviewed their operational training offer in 2022-23, benchmarking existing training provision against the core competencies of operational crews. The revised training model sees an increase in training capacity to deliver risk-critical training across a range of fire and rescue skills.

The training model is supported by an operational training strategy and is underpinned by a three-year training delivery plan which sets out the schedule of operational training courses from 2023-24.

The plan aims to deliver a comprehensive training programme that includes new initial courses and a three-year cycle of refresher courses. So as to deliver this plan, there has been an increase in the number of operational instructors to enable the delivery of new development courses, incident command training days, and the overhaul of learning management systems.

Managers are encouraged to use the plan to identify training requirements and to select training dates for their staff. Refresher courses will be delivered across a number of core skills, including road traffic collisions, hazardous materials, and working at height. Flexibility has also been considered in the training plan to enable courses to be facilitated locally in Service premises, as well as additional weekend dates that will improve access to training for on-call staff.

The new plan is a step forward in training and development provision; the comprehensive plan will enable staff to identify their training needs and select dates that work best for them. The increase in the number of operational instructors will ensure the effectiveness and currency of information, and the overhaul of learning management systems will improve available knowledge-based content for staff.

Action 6: focus on improving the effectiveness of cover provided through the Retained / on-call Duty System (on-call firefighters).

The advent of the recruitment and availability teams in each area has provided a dedicated resource to focus on the issue of recruitment and availability. The Service is able to target specific areas for recruitment, as well as identifying key training and development requirements to improve the availability of on-call staff.

During the year, a team of staff worked hard to produce the Retained Duty staff experience review which was published at the end of the financial year. The findings of this report will form a fundamental part of the response function business plan in the year 2023-24.

During the year, the Service reached a significant milestone at which a net increase was recorded in the on-call staff establishment, thus providing a positive testament to the recruitment and availability teams in each area.

Action 7: review Business Continuity Management and enhancing the Service's capability to deal with large-scale incidents.

The implementation of our management restructure in 2022-23 resulted in a whole scale review of our business continuity plans across all departments, ensuring the Service can operate as effectively and efficiently as possible during periods of potential disruption.

As with many public sector organisations, potential industrial action posed a significant business continuity management (BCM) risk that required planning during 2022-23. Following a successful ballot by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), the Service implemented both Gold and Silver BCM groups and embarked on planning and preparing for large-scale industrial action by staff across North Wales. Whilst a national pay settlement averted industrial action, the Service was well-prepared for industrial action, and the plans

remain in place ready to be implemented, should industrial action become a possibility again.

In March 2023, the Service participated in a National BCM exercise which was facilitated across all Local Resilience Forums and the Welsh and National Governments. Exercise 'Mighty Oak' was a three-day exercise to test the UK's response to a National Power Outage (NPO). Whilst the outcomes and learning from the exercise are still being developed by the facilitators, the Service has commenced its own development of a Service-wide BCM plan for an NPO. During 2023-24 this will be refined so as to be ready for implementation, should the exercise scenario become a reality.

In relation to our preparedness for large-scale exercise, a summary below outlines some of the multiagency exercise activities completed during 2022-23.

Conwy Tunnel exercise

We took advantage of a week-long closure of the westbound carriageway to arrange a multi-agency training exercise and familiarisation visit to the tunnel. This provided crews with a realistic training scenario and an opportunity to review operational tactical plans for the tunnel.

Holyhead Port Exercise

A training scenario to test operational response in a maritime setting was carried out at Holyhead Port. A particular focus was on breathing apparatus procedures and the use of the Dräger Smoke Hoods

Exercise Eithin

An exercise took place in Bangor which was based at a students' halls of residence involving an accommodation block consisting of four floors.

Exercise Connect

A security and emergency response exercise was held at the Trawsfynydd decommissioning site, working with Magnox staff and the Office for Nuclear Regulation who oversaw the training event.

Action 8: Monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of programmes undertaken in partnership with other organisations.

Forming and maintaining partnerships with other emergency services and agencies enables us to extend our safety messages into the community, and helps to promote and maintain our community profile.

Some examples of our partnerships working in this way are:

North Wales Police and Operation Diopside – Fatal 5 Collaboration

Operation Diopside took place in the Rhyl area, with North Wales Police stopping drivers for speeding, not wearing a seatbelt, mobile phone usage and careless / inconsiderate driving. Depending on the severity of the offence, drivers were offered to attend a road

safety intervention course, while others were issued fines and points on their license.

NHS and Help me Quit (7.3% of accidental dwelling fires involved smoking materials)

As part of a new initiative this year, staff gave smokers details of the free help available from local stop smoking experts during safe and well check visits to their home. As well as the health impacts of smoking, people need to be aware of the deadly risks it creates in the home, and how careless disposal of smoking materials can very quickly and easily lead to a fire.

Outside Lives Ltd

Staff attended an event in Flintshire to celebrate Carers Week. The event, organized by North East Wales Carers Information Service (NEWCIS) in partnership with Outside Lives Ltd, was an opportunity for unpaid carers to explore new wellbeing practices, and gave our staff the opportunity to talk to carers from across the region.

Action 9: develop an effective asset management system that promotes optimal resource allocation.

The asset management system has had a technological overhaul, including integration with the processes of stakeholders from other departments and the development of a system to speed up the discovery and recovery of assets that have been allocated to staff who have left the organisation.

Regular audits have been carried out, although their initiation has only been on opportunistic or reactive basis whilst the recruitment of ICT staff remains unresolved.

Action 10: Implement the findings of the Grenfell Tower Fire inquiry and review to mitigate the risk of such a tragedy occurring in North Wales.

The Welsh Government has started the process of legislating for changes brought about by the Grenfell incident; it is instigating high-level groups to look at the challenges identified in the white paper.

We are able to influence this via the all-Wales working group, by continuing to respond to consultations which relate to changes required in addition to those that will be introduced by means of the process described above. The consultations are wide-ranging and will have a significant impact in all aspects of fire safety.

We have also responded on an informal basis to the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor and Inspector for Wales, about the proposal not to enact all of the fire safety changes required by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

We continue to support premises throughout North Wales in their efforts to reduce the fire risks present; this is achieved by education, auditing and formal notices.

All actions from stage one of the Grenfell Tower inquiry have been completed; the Service has reviewed how it trains, prepares, and communicates between the incident ground and Control.

Objective 4: To continue to identify opportunities to encourage greater engagement with people, communities, staff and stakeholders

Well-being goals met:



During 2022-23, the Authority continued to improve the way in which it communicates and engages with communities about the services it delivers.

A collaborative approach working across our own functions and together with our emergency service partners, local authorities, public services boards and other stakeholders ensures the consistent and widespread promotion of safety messages as well as the development of innovative techniques and the sharing of best practices.

A particular focus this year was improving communications with our staff, in particular in relation to those employed under the retained duty system (on-call) and implementing the key findings from our very first Fire Family staff survey.

Action 1: raise awareness of, help prevent arson attacks and reduce the number of deliberate fires and false alarms.

The Arson Reduction Team (ART) continued to engage with policing teams, regularly putting out the 'Need to Know' document on how to contact and how to refer an individual to the Arson Reduction Team. Training and awareness sessions were delivered to all new Police Constables and Police Community Support Officer recruits as part of their initial training.

ART worked with various partners to raise awareness of the team and identify any hotspot areas. We recorded and analysed all deliberate fire statistics to identify any emerging trends, and which partners we need to engage with, depending on the type of fires and associated crimes and issues in that area. We attended all Vulnerable Adult Risk and Anti-social behaviour meetings across the Service area, and produced reports on the Team's activity and work with partners in those identified areas.

We continued to conduct site visits at high-risk derelict properties across North Wales, working with owners and local authorities to secure them in order to assist with the reduction of the risk of arson and the public safety risk. We also visited businesses which were identified as being at risk of arson.

ART are a point of contact for all high-risk referrals for threats to burn, kill or harm vulnerable people throughout North Wales; these referrals come from various partners including Police, Social Services, the Domestic Abuse Safety Unit, the Youth Justice Service and the Probation Service. ART manage referrals and delivers fire-setter interventions

to children, young people and adults so as to reduce further deliberate fires. The Team attends schools to conduct consequence talks to assemblies and smaller groups.

ART also attends Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences meetings; these are for people being released from prison.

Action 2: engage with local employers, communities and those directly affected by fire and other emergency incidents to develop prevention activities and campaigns.

The Service continued to hold bi-monthly meetings with the British Red Cross (BRC) to review incidents so as to improve partnership working. In June the BRC attended two incidents in North Wales, of which one was to provide support for a large family who had been made unintentionally homeless after a kitchen fire. They supported the occupiers while they were being rehomed and provided emergency food, money and clothing. The second occasion was after a fire in the roof space left a family and their dog with only the clothes they stood up in. On this occasion, the occupiers were briefly housed by friends and family, with the extra support from the BRC in the form of emergency cash, clothes and toiletries.

The staff from British Red Cross said that the volunteers were delighted that the Incident Commanders had requested their attendance and that they had been mobilised. They went on to say that the information provided by the Incident Commanders via the Control operators ensured that the volunteers had a good situational awareness and insight as to what would be needed before they arrived.

Action 3: promote national and local safety campaigns, ensuring that areas of greatest risk are prioritised, for example fires caused by cooking.

This year saw a new campaign launched together with our colleagues from the Mid and West Wales and the South Wales Fire and Rescue Services to address concerns about fire safety during the 'Cost of Living Crisis'.

By January 2023 it was expected that more than half of UK households could be in 'Fuel Poverty', and this is likely to increase fire risk at home as people looked to find alternative ways to heat and light their homes.

Action 4: maintain the currency of existing information-sharing agreements, and seek to establish new agreements where appropriate.

Partnership managers from across the service were tasked with pursuing data disclosure agreements with partner agencies using the universal template that ensures adherence to the requirements of the relevant legislation.

Progress however has been slow as it is often difficult to encourage partners to sign off on agreements, but we remain committed to getting these agreements drawn up and signed with a view to adding them to the All-Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI) agreement register. Work is planned to review existing agreements upon their

renewal date in order to upgrade them into the latest format. This work will be on-going as we develop new partnerships, close down old ones and maintain the currency of active agreements.

One such example was the completion of a new data-sharing agreement with Public Health Wales (PHW) for us to provide aggregated and anonymised details of grassland, woodland and crop fires. This will allow PHW to analyse the data on an all-Wales basis and will inform the service they provide to their users.

Action 5: conduct a health and well-being survey of all staff, promoting activities throughout the Service.

We made significant efforts to promote the health, fitness, and well-being of our staff. In collaboration with the Mind charity, we actively supported a mental health awareness week. Our dedicated health, fitness, and well-being team organised daily activities on the Workplace Facebook platform, encouraging staff to prioritise their mental health and providing support to those who may be facing challenges.

As part of our commitment to employee well-being, we introduced the rebranded and revised Calon Fund, a voluntary staff fund that operates independently but with our support; this fund aims to provide emotional, physical, sociable, and charitable support to our staff. Additionally, we offer a range of resources to ensure the well-being of our employees; these include the Health, Fitness, and Wellbeing Team, Colleague Supporters, Blue Light Champions, Care First (Employee Assistance Program), and our Service Chaplain, all of whom provide confidential assistance, mental health support and emotional guidance.

We supported 'Time to Talk' day, emphasising the importance of staying connected and initiating conversations about well-being. Our Health, Fitness and Wellbeing Adviser highlighted the positive impact of reaching out and talking to someone, and how to access formal and informal support. By encouraging our 'Cuppa and a Catch Up' event, our staff have an opportunity to connect and to expand their networks within the Service.

We celebrated International Men's Day in Llangefni by bringing together staff from across the Service. The event commenced with a 5km park run, with the notable achievement of a fire officer running in full fire kit, and the morning continued with a 'Cuppa and Catch Up' session at Llangefni Fire Station, promoting engagement, raising awareness of men's concerns, and emphasising the importance of mental well-being. Our Deputy Chief Fire Officer attended the event and his support was greatly appreciated. The event underscored the significance of addressing men's mental health and of fostering open conversations.

Later in the year, some of our staff participated in an LGBTQ+ Online event delivered by the Unique Transgender Network. The course provided valuable insights and guidance, empowering participants to become Fire Pride Allies and to support LGBTQ+ individuals in the workplace. Its objectives included enhancing understanding of the challenges faced by Gender Diverse People, equipping participants with the knowledge to support and collaborate with them, and ensuring compliance with legal rights and equality duties. The event successfully celebrated the unique experiences and talents that gender diversity brings to the workplace while fostering positive change in understanding and behaviour.

Action 6: complete a review of the Corporate Communication Strategy.

This action was completed during 2021-22, with the following comments.

A new Corporate Communications Delivery plan for 2021-24 was published following the review of the Corporate Communications Strategy.

The delivery plan outlines the direction and framework actively to support and engage with a wide range of internal and external audiences, and to do so clearly and effectively.

Action 7: report on energy usage and reducing carbon prevalence within NWFRS buildings, including the development of an 'Invest to Save' fund for future carbon reduction projects.

This action is ongoing, and we have now hired an Environment and Climate Change Manager to oversee our energy consumption and carbon emissions.

We have prepared an Environmental Strategy for the period to 2030 which sets out how we will improve the energy efficiency of our buildings, reduce waste and minimize our carbon emissions.

We have developed an energy consumption analysis tool which allows us directly to compare energy efficiency and emissions across our whole estate, while compensating for differences in building size and local weather. Using this, we will prioritise the worst-performing buildings for improvement.

We have engaged with 'Re:Fit Cymru', a procurement framework provider which will assist us in identifying a package of energy efficiency improvements across our whole estate which, once installed, will have the financial savings contractually guaranteed by the installer. We will be seeking to borrow the money to fund these measures interest-free, using the guaranteed cost savings to fund the repayments; this will allow us to reduce our energy consumption and carbon emissions without impacting budgets elsewhere in the Service.

Action 8: develop an online generic / standalone rolling survey which reflects all seven corporate objectives which could be used to record feedback from all stakeholders on the services the Authority provides.

This action was not completed during 2022-23; however, a new process for departmental plan was implemented during the year and the all relevant objectives are captured within these plans. The plans will be reviewed each quarter during 2023-24 to gather evidence against the Well-being of Future Generations Act objectives, the Services Building Blocks and Corporate Plan Objectives.

Action 9: implement a staff-led review into the experiences of staff employed under the Retained Duty System (RDS) / On-call system.

During January 2023, the Retained Duty System Staff Experience Review was completed. This brought together the experiences, thoughts, ideas and opinions of staff who provide 'on-call' cover in stations across the whole of North Wales.

A dedicated team of Service personnel was committed to completing research, identifying key findings and proposing recommendations against 10 key lines of enquiry which were in relation to:

- RDS pay and reward
- RDS attraction, selection, recruitment and on-boarding
- RDS promotion process
- Local line management and staff retention
- Time allocated for training
- Time allocated for administration
- Utilisation of skills
- Engaging with primary employers
- Recognising contribution and celebrating achievement
- Resource requirements

These will now be reviewed by the Service Leadership Team and an action plan developed.

Action 10: work to agree an action plan to focus on the key findings from the Fire Family staff survey in relation to both cultural change and a proposed change to staff structure.

The survey was successfully released during the 2021-22 year, with the results analysed and an action plan formulated and shared with members of the Service Leadership Team (SLT) and the wider workforce.

Updates were then provided in relation to progress against the action plan using a series of infographics.

Further information will now be provided to the next SLT meeting in October to discuss how the action plan can be updated and reviewed.

Preparation work has already started for the next survey which is due to be issued late in 2023.

Objective 5: To maintain a suitably resilient, skilled, professional and flexible workforce

Well-being goals met:



The Authority continued to extend its efforts to attract, develop and retain a workforce that reflects the diversity within the communities it serves.

Supporting equality and diversity lies at the heart of the Authority's culture and core values, embracing a commitment to diversity and inclusion, a desire to strive for excellence, protecting communities and valuing its people. A workforce that is appropriately developed and trained to be safe benefits the people of Wales, and a well-developed performance management framework supports managers in meeting the demands of their roles.

Action 1: recruit, develop and retain a highly skilled, motivated and bilingual workforce.

The Service has resumed active participation of in-person recruitment events and job fairs held across the region. These events provide valuable opportunities for us to engage with jobseekers, to promote current and upcoming vacancies, and to interact with potential candidates. Notable events include Welsh-speaking job fairs in Bangor, Dolgellau and Bala, as well as careers days in Colwyn Bay, Rhyl, Deeside, Llangollen and Wrexham, thus offering us exposure throughout North Wales.

We have taken proactive measures to increase awareness of job vacancies and to encourage applications; examples of this are the sharing of vacancies on the Service's main Facebook page, and on general North Wales and local county-based job groups on the platform. Furthermore, we have created a dedicated North Wales Fire Careers page on Facebook which has gained a significant following. Notably, our posts on Facebook have reached thousands of people and received substantial interactions, resulting in increased visibility and interest in Service roles. As part of our strategy to showcase the diverse range of roles within the Service, we have produced videos featuring the current postholders; these provide insight into a typical day within the role and highlight what individuals find fulfilling about working for us. The aim is to attract potential candidates who may not have previously considered us an option.

The Human Resource (HR) Recruitment Specialists play a vital role in the Service's Recruitment and Availability group, focusing on On-call recruitment strategies. A review of the On-call literature and templates was conducted to ensure consistency in branding and messaging, aligning them with organisational guidelines. Similarly, a thorough review of Green Book recruitment literature was undertaken to enhance its effectiveness. Refreshing these documents in a new format aligns them with policy templates and effectively communicates our core values, promoting appeal among new recruits.

The Service has made various updates and improvements to recruitment materials and processes. Candidate booklets now include pictures reflecting the diversity of our employees and roles, so as to highlight the different opportunities within the Service and

increase their attraction. Line Manager documents for internal applicants have been updated in order to collect more relevant information that complements existing HR data. Contract documents have also been updated in line with legislation, i.e. compliance regarding vetting, DBS, right to work, training, and qualifications.

The HR Recruitment Specialists attend and contributes to the Welsh language group, streamlining Welsh language proficiency requirements for existing employees, new recruits and applicants. Informative videos featuring Control staff members and Compliance Officers demonstrate the practical application of the Welsh language in various roles, serving recruitment purposes and being shown during school events. Updates to the recruitment information booklet clarify Welsh language requirements, eliminating misconceptions and ensuring accurate understanding. A checklist has been implemented in order consistently to meet the Service's bilingual requirements for advertised roles.

The HR Specialists are visiting stations and departments and facilitating Siop Siarad sessions. This initiative was prompted by the Fire Family staff survey and is aimed at promoting two-way conversations and providing the opportunity to speak freely about wider issues, and to highlight views and new ideas from staff at stations and locations across the region. It is an opportunity to network and to share new ideas, to be open to new ways of thinking, and to help staff feel included and able to challenge processes in a mutually supportive and positive environment. Feedback from these sessions is shared with the relevant groups / committees for consideration and awareness.

Action 2: develop employment practices aimed at increasing the employment prospects of people who might otherwise find it difficult to gain access to work and prioritise action to promote gender equality.

The HR Department now provides management information to support decision-making in workforce planning; this information includes data on staffing numbers, starters, leavers, and recruitment-related metrics, and the updated Organisational Resourcing Committee relies on this information to inform its decisions. We have improved the collection of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) data during the recruitment stage, and it will help identify trends and monitor specific groups facing challenges in the application process, enabling targeted positive action to be taken.

During the first and second quarters, the Service carried out recruitment for Wholetime Duty System Firefighters, conducting a total of 120 remote interviews using Zoom. A total of 796 applications were received for the positions; among the applicants, 15% were female and 3% were from BME backgrounds, indicating some diversity in the applicant pool. In an effort to attract underrepresented groups, pre-campaign taster sessions were held in March 2022 and these sessions specifically targeted individuals from diverse backgrounds, including female, BME and LGBTQ+ participants. Over the course of three sessions, 19 individuals attended the taster sessions; impressively, 16 of these participants went on to apply for the WDS Firefighter role, and six applicants successfully completed all stages of the recruitment process. Between the two intakes, 12 of the appointed applicants are female, one is BAME, three are LGBTQ+, seven are fluent Welsh speakers and there are two with declared neuro-diverse conditions. Five are also current employees of the service,

four are employed as On-call firefighters and one is employed in a support role. Five of the appointed applicants also attended the pre-campaign positive action sessions in March 2022.

So as better to understand and address barriers faced by unemployed candidates, the HR Specialists have been attending recruitment events and building relationships with the relevant sectors. These engagements provide insights into the obstacles faced by job seekers as well as opportunities to explore potential solutions. External recruitment events and job fairs allow us to engage with job seekers, promote vacancies, and address any barriers that may have deterred individuals from applying. By actively addressing these barriers, we aim to enhance inclusivity in the recruitment process.

The Service is committed to promoting equality and fairness, and will consider all requests for support and reasonable adjustments within the recruitment process. All applicants, whether internal or external, are encouraged to disclose any disability or neurodivergent conditions within their application in order for any reasonable and appropriate adjustments to be considered. It is however recognised that employees and applicants are not obliged to disclose a neurodivergent condition; however, appropriate support can only be offered if the Service is made aware of the condition by the applicant.

The Service conducted a thorough review and redesign of its recruitment literature to eliminate potential barriers that could hinder candidates' engagement and comprehension. Efforts have been made to remove jargon and complex terminology and to create accessible and inclusive materials. The adverts now include the Service's core values in the strapline, transparently conveying the organisation's mission and culture. This allows candidates to assess their alignment with the Service's values from the beginning, facilitating self-selection and a better fit between candidates and the organisation's ethos. Our advertisements also highlight the Services' dedication to multiple programmes, including those addressing domestic violence, whistleblowing, corporate health and the Armed Forces; they also emphasise our status as an employer supporting individuals with disabilities.

A dedicated Facebook page was launched to enhance accessibility and engagement, serving as a central hub to disseminate information about vacancies, with all posts listed bilingually to cater to a diverse audience. Various images featuring staff members have been used to provide an holistic view of the Service and to increase awareness of all the roles available. Additionally, the page showcases a member of staff currently holding the advertised role, offering a personal perspective and essential information for candidates; this approach creates an inviting and engaging online space in which potential candidates can develop a genuine understanding of the roles available.

The Service adheres to a fair and merit-based approach when evaluating all applications, without bias or discrimination. The Service encourages applicants to request reasonable adjustments during the application and interview stages; this commitment is reiterated throughout the recruitment process, highlighting the opportunity for applicants to seek necessary adjustments. We aim to create an environment in which candidates feel comfortable and empowered to participate fully, and to accommodate their specific needs appropriately.

Action 3: adopt agile and flexible working models which will contribute to a low carbon society through reducing emissions associated with travel for work purposes.

The Service has implemented an agile working policy that provides staff members with the flexibility to work either from home or the office, fostering a hybrid arrangement when feasible; this policy applies to both existing and new employees, ensuring a consistent approach throughout the Service. By reducing the need for daily commuting, the agile working approach significantly contributes to a notable decrease in the carbon emissions associated with driving.

The Service supports the adoption of new ways of working, to create more flexible and technologically-enabled teams who can work more efficiently to deliver an excellent service whilst improving the relationship between work and home life. We also recognise the environmental benefits of utilising agile working to minimise unnecessary travel. Agile working is an option for those in certain roles and are supported wherever possible; for employees in some roles including front-line firefighting, some elements of agile working (such as virtual meetings) may be possible, but flexibility about working from different locations may not be possible if operational delivery requirements are to be maintained. This is noted in all job adverts and discussed with candidates during the interview process.

We are currently in the process of reviewing and updating our Flexible Working policy to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation and to incorporate best practices. Our existing policy follows a reason-neutral approach, allowing employees to request flexible working arrangements without the obligation to disclose the specific reasons behind their request. This approach respects and recognises individual privacy whilst promoting a supportive and inclusive work environment.

Furthermore, the adoption of agile working practices within the Service has facilitated the continued utilisation of digital communication tools such as Teams, enabling virtual meetings and minimising the necessity for work-related travel. This strategic shift towards hybrid working and remote collaboration has also played a crucial role in reducing emissions.

In addition to reducing carbon emissions, the agile working arrangements actively promote the concept of "hot-desking", encouraging employees to optimise desk space and thereby decreasing the energy consumption related to lighting and heating.

Action 4: continue to seek out new opportunities to develop apprenticeship schemes within the Service.

The Service currently implements several apprenticeship programmes, currently within our Finance and Fleet Departments, and offers operational roles in the form of Apprentice Firefighters. Each of these schemes is currently ongoing.

A group of 12 WDS Firefighter Apprentices commenced in their roles in September 2022, and an additional 12 apprentices joined the Service in January 2023. Between the two intakes, 12 of the appointed applicants are female, one is BME, three are LGBTQ+, seven are fluent Welsh speakers and there are two with declared neuro-diverse conditions. Five are also current employees of the Service, four employed as On-call firefighters and

one employed in a support role. Five of the appointed applicants also attended the pre-campaign positive action sessions in March 2022. In order to support their onboarding and initial induction, the HR Department conducted an information session which provided an overview of the HR Department, its key processes and pertinent information in relation to their employment. The objectives were to ensure their active engagement with the Service, to promote a smooth transition into their roles and to aid in their retention.

Throughout the initial stages of the recruitment process, hiring managers are consistently consulted about the suitability of the roles for apprenticeships. Options for apprenticeship opportunities are explored and revisited as the recruitment process progresses.

The Service is an early adopter of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Direct Entry Scheme and is currently advertising for Station Manager positions. We have previously undertaken direct entry recruitment to roles at Strategic, Middle and Supervisory Manager levels. The primary aim of the scheme is to provide a different route to entry into the role of Station Manager, alongside the more traditional Firefighter route; this can play a valuable part in diversifying senior management in the Fire and Rescue Service.

The Service continues to review the suitability of direct entry to all operational management roles prior to recruitment, and has recently completed a recruitment process for an Area Manager role as part of the Service Leadership Team, and offered this as a direct entry route. Following a fair and open selection process with a mixture of candidates from both operational and non-operational backgrounds, a non-operational female candidate was offered the role but later declined the position; the role was subsequently offered to the next candidate who has operational experience.

Action 5: adopt a more holistic approach to improving employee wellbeing, continue to invest in reducing absence and concentrate on health promotion.

Over the past year, the HR Department has collaborated with the Occupational Health provider to improve existing processes and to identify areas for development. Regular monthly meetings with the Contract Manager have established a strong partnership and facilitated the implementation of new working methods which are aligned with best practice.

The HR Specialists are visiting stations and departments to provide HR Overview sessions, including recent important updates to familiarise employees with the services that HR provides and the benefits available to them; they are also facilitating Siop Siarad sessions. This initiative was prompted by the Fire Family staff survey and is aimed at promoting two-way conversations and providing the opportunity to speak freely about wider issues, as well as to highlight views and new ideas from staff at stations and locations across the region. It is an opportunity to network and to share new ideas, to be open to new ways of thinking, and to help staff feel included and able to challenge processes in a mutually supportive and positive environment. Feedback from these sessions is shared with the relevant groups / committees for consideration and awareness.

The establishment of the Attendance, Grievance & Discipline Committee marks a significant step for the Service, as this body takes responsibility for the development of policies related to absence management, grievances and matters of conduct, including

disciplinary procedures. By focusing on these critical areas, the Committee promotes a fair and transparent work environment that encourages appropriate behaviour and effectively seeks to resolve disputes.

Recognising the importance of supporting employees with long-term health conditions and mental health difficulties arising from stress, the Service has created two distinct pathways as guidance for Line Managers. These pathways are tailored to address specific needs and are scheduled to be shared with managers in early 2023. This ensures that the latter have the necessary resources and knowledge to provide appropriate support and guidance to their team members.

To enhance awareness and accessibility to available support options within the organisation, a new poster has been designed and distributed to all departments and stations. The poster prominently features the range of support options currently available, with a particular focus on mobile app support in the form of QR codes. It also provides information on telephone- and web-based support, offering employees multiple avenues to seek assistance, based on their individual needs and preferences.

In a proactive effort better to understand and meet the needs of employees requiring support, members of the HR team and the Occupational Health Unit (OHU) team visited Jubilee House. This visit provided a valuable insight into the services offered at the centre, equipping the HR team with first-hand knowledge to enable them to guide and support employees seeking assistance effectively.

A dedicated health and wellbeing team has been established to ensure an holistic and proactive approach to employee wellbeing in collaboration with support from the HR team. The health and wellbeing team is dedicated to promoting and supporting the overall health and wellbeing of employees, fostering a positive working environment.

Action 6: secure revalidation of the Platinum Corporate Health Award.

During the year, we submitted evidence for a status check to Healthy Working Wales to seek revalidation of our Platinum Corporate Health Award.

Our submission detailed the work of many teams across our organisation and sought to demonstrate our commitment to sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Our submission highlighted our Environmental Strategy 2023-2030, which aligns with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, covering waste and recycling, water management, fleet operations, biodiversity, energy conservation, sustainable procurement and community engagement.

We were praised for our corporate accomplishments in various areas. Noteworthy achievements included the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points at multiple sites, the replacement of diesel fleet cars with hybrid vehicles and an operational trial of Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil as a substitute for diesel. Our active collaboration with partners such as North Wales Police in procurement matters and our participation in All-Wales Procurement exercises aimed at achieving social and economic value was noted.

Our drive to improve our estate through facilities management improvements such as energy-efficient lighting installations, door replacements, enhanced heating controls and the exploration of air source heat pumps was received positively. Our commitment to reducing waste was evident through our reduction of waste to landfill achievements.

Community engagement initiatives such as partnerships with the National Trust and the sponsorship of events demonstrated our support for diversity and inclusion. The report also highlights the Service's dedication to working with children and young people through programmes such as Fire Cadets, safety education in schools and collaborations to prevent fires and promote well-being.

The assessor's report concluded by awarding the Service the Platinum Enhanced Status Check, recognising the organisation's exemplary efforts and dedication to sustainability and corporate social responsibility.

Action 7: continue to contribute to the All-Wales 'People and Organisational Development Strategy'.

The new Chair of the People and Organisational Development Group updated the group's Terms of Reference (and Agenda). The group unanimously agreed to formally approve and sign off the redrafted version. The main contents of which sets out the purpose of the group to work on the behalf of the three Fire & Rescue Services in Wales to:

- Proactively maintain an overview of all HR, Learning & Development, Equality & Diversity, and Welsh Language activities.
- Identify opportunities for HR, Learning & Development, Equality & Diversity, and Welsh Language collaboration.
- Anticipate, address and lead on the resolution of issues that affect people issues external or internal.
- Develop an All Wales HR, POD Strategy & Action Plan.
- Create and monitor Task & Finish Groups as required.
- National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Workstreams – consider information emanating from the NFCC.
- Work to develop close liaison with the Welsh Government, NFCC, and other key stakeholders.
- POD Group members to brief their own Service Leadership Team members so they are fully briefed and views shared.

In addition, there is an ongoing initiative to establish a dedicated forum that focuses on recruitment and enhancing the representation of underrepresented groups. The objective is to form a subgroup under the People and Organisational Development Group (PODG), that collectively examines specific themes and best practices; this subgroup will establish a network across the entirety of Wales, facilitating collaboration and progress in these areas.

Regarding operational matters, a review of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) paper on 'modified duties' has been conducted, and fitness standards are currently under review to ensure consistency across all three Welsh fire and rescue services. Health and fitness advisors have been invited to participate in future meetings in order to contribute their expertise. Furthermore, continuing discussions are taking place regarding guidance and promotion of the Firefighters Charity, with the aim of providing support and resources to firefighters.

A review of the NFCC paper on 'modified duties' has been undertaken, and fitness standards are also under review to ensure consistency across the three Welsh services. Health & Fitness advisors have been invited to attend future meetings, while discussions are ongoing regarding the guidance and promotion of the Firefighters Charity.

The 3 Fire and Rescue Services in Wales will individually review the NFCC Maturity Module Levels in order to conduct a gap analysis. Areas such as equality and recruitment are being considered for an all-Wales review assessing the relevance of specific topics in this context.

Action 8: improve ways of supporting staff to become future leaders.

The Service has engaged in a number of workstreams relating to a direct entry scheme being developed by the NFCC. The scheme was commissioned through the NFCC Leadership project, alongside several other initiatives to support the development of leaders within the fire sector. The scheme will be a framework to support people entering the fire service at Station and Area Manager levels in undertaking operational roles. It is a nationally-developed programme that is robust, quality-assured, and credible; it will be centrally coordinated and supported at a national level, whilst being delivered at a regional and local level. The scheme will be designed to be both additional and complementary to existing progression routes so as to ensure that we continue to nurture and develop our internal staff. NWFRS, along with six other Fire and Rescue Services in the UK, is committed to supporting the project and anticipates recruitment of one Direct Entry Scheme (DES) candidate on the Station Manager pathway programme.

Two interactive events were conducted in Old Colwyn and Rhyl which focused on promoting an inclusive workplace and strong leadership within the Service. The morning session centered around Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity (EDI), led by the Service's EDI Officer; in the afternoon, a speaker from Academi Wales delivered a 'Leadership on Ice' presentation, aiming to inspire staff to pursue their purpose with passion, practice solid values and establish enduring relationships. These events aimed to develop leadership behaviours and address areas for improvement as identified through our 'Fire Family' Staff Survey. Becoming an inclusive organisation is a continuous journey, and events such as these that develop the skills, knowledge and understanding of our future leaders ensure that we can evolve as a Service to meet the changing demands on public services.

Action 9: introduce a new staff structure that will help to increase the number of staff in communities.

The new management restructure was implemented in April 2022, providing an additional staff resource in each of the areas to assist with availability, recruitment and the training of staff so as to try and improve the availability of on-call fire appliances. Additional resources are also available to improve the operational preparedness of crews through increased exercising, allowing staff to increase their familiarisation with key risks and carry out training exercises in those locations (for example Trawsfynnydd Power Station). During the year, a review of the restructure has occurred and some slight changes are planned for June 2023.

Objective 6: To develop ways of becoming more environmentally conscious in order to minimise the impact of our activity on the environment

Well-being goals met:



In 2017, the Welsh Government set the ambition of achieving a net carbon neutral public sector by 2030. In March 2019, it published 'Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales' which aims to support the public sector to baseline, monitor and report progress towards carbon neutrality.

In 2022-23, the Authority reaffirmed its commitment to improving environmental performance and considering it in all areas of its work, from fire prevention to making sure that it considers environmentally- friendly technology. The Authority also committed to renewing its environmental vision so as to become a more environmentally conscious and responsible organisation, and it will develop and produce a new Environmental Strategy during 2023- 24.

Action 1: establish a Strategic Board with responsibility for developing an Environment Strategy for the Authority.

An Environment and Sustainability Working Group has now been established, which is chaired by the Environment and Climate Change Manager and meets on a monthly basis. This working group is developing the Environmental Strategy for the period 2023-2030, following a series of working group sessions with members of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Environment and Sustainability Working Group reports to the Land and Property Committee which meets every three months.

Action 2: explore opportunities to reduce plastic packaging on goods brought in to the Service.

The new Environmental Strategy will also require the development of a Waste Reduction Strategy which will set out how we will reduce plastic packaging on purchased goods.

We have now hired a dedicated Procurement and Contract Manager who is reviewing potential ways to minimise packaging waste, and how to promote better environmental performance within our supply chain.

Action 3: identify ways to use water supplies as responsibly as possible.

Within our new Environmental Strategy, there will be commitments to:

- Measuring and reporting corporate water consumption throughout our estate.
- Considering rainwater harvesting, grey water use and similar water conservation measures whenever refurbishment or rebuilding works are undertaken.
- Educating and encouraging staff and other users of our premises on water conservation and efficiency.
- Engaging with Welsh Water to make use of treated wastewater for firefighting.

Action 4: seek opportunities to reduce the amount of waste the Authority sends to landfill.

The Service disposes of approximately 83 tonnes of waste every year, of which the majority is recycled. The bulk of the remainder goes to Energy from Waste plants in order to be incinerated.

Only feminine hygiene waste is routed to landfill due to handling requirements, and this makes up less than 10kg per year.

We are actively examining ways to improve the effectiveness of our recycling systems, and will begin pre-sorting recyclable waste at all our premises from April 2024.

Action 5: identify ways to increase biodiversity on premises.

In December, Fire Authority members approved the 2022 Biodiversity Report and three-year Plan; this reported the actions we took in the period from 2019 to 2022 to improve biodiversity on our estate and the wider North Wales area. It included measures such as reduced mowing schedules and the provision of bird boxes, as well as the important work that the Service carries out to prevent wildfires which can be extremely harmful to plant and animal life.

Ideas to improve biodiversity are discussed at every monthly meeting of our Environment and Sustainability Working Group. The actions we take will be recorded and reported in our next Biodiversity Report and Action Plan in 2025.

Action 6: work with Public Services Boards across North Wales to understand climate change from a regional perspective.

Our Deputy Chief Fire Officer and the two Assistant Chief Fire Officers are members of the three Public Service Boards covering the North Wales area.

As the Fire and Rescue Service is on the front line in dealing with the consequences of climate change, we are able to contribute a valuable perspective to these groups as well as learning about the experiences of other public agencies.

The Principal Officers who attend the Public Service Boards are in regular contact with our Environment and Climate Change Manager, and any relevant information is fed back in either direction.

Action 7: working with landowners to reduce incidences of wildfires and encourage notification of controlled burning.

The burning season runs from the 1st of October up until 15th March (up to the 31st of March in Upland areas), during which period farmers and landowners across Wales can burn heather, grass, bracken and gorse. There are strict legal requirements for burning, and individuals must have a 'burn plan' in place to ensure they are burning safely.

We have seen how wildfires put lives at risk – the lives of our communities as well as those of our firefighters. These fires tie up our resources when we could be required at another emergency.

The rise in global temperatures affects the growth of vegetation and, as a result, the controlled burning period can coincide with drier-than-usual ground conditions, more vegetation and wildlife activity.

In the lead-up to this period of burning, the Service promotes the notification of controlled burning on its website and all of its social media platforms. The Service also engages with farmers, landowners, land managers and strategic partners including Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in order to help reduce the incidences of wildfire across North Wales.

In a proactive attempt to engage homeowners who have controlled burns within their gardens, staff from the Fire Safety Department visited garden centres and similar premises to promote our controlled burning advice and our notification telephone number.

Action 8: replacing technical rescue units to achieve greater fuel efficiency and lower engine emissions.

The replacement of the Technical Rescue Units was put on hold whilst we consider options to support the 'Emergency Cover Review', the outcomes of which will provide the basis for the public consultation which is due in July 2023.

Action 9: consider the five recommendations outlined below by Audit Wales in their review of the Authority's progress towards reducing its carbon emissions.

1. Develop an accurate carbon baseline.

This action is ongoing. We have chosen to form a baseline with data collected after the Covid 19 pandemic, as our operations were significantly affected by 'stay at home' orders. It is also important to ensure that the baseline reflects the state of our environmental performance before we did anything to improve it.

With this in mind, we will be using carbon emissions from our annual report for financial year 2021-22, combined with the emissions for home working and commuting from 2022-23 which have not been included before. We will regularly review the carbon emissions baseline and ensure that it remains accurate.

2. Develop a specific plan for carbon reduction that sets out the actions that the Authority will take to become carbon neutral and to meet Welsh Government targets.

This action has been completed. We have prepared an Environmental Strategy for the period 2023–2030, together with detailed decarbonisation plans for our fleet and buildings. Detailed plans for procurement and waste will be developed in the coming months. Finally, we will publish a strategy discussing how we plan to address the carbon emissions that we cannot reduce ourselves, such as those made by our suppliers.

3. Revise the Vehicle Replacement Programme policy and agree the Authority's strategy for replacing diesel appliances and improving the charging infrastructure across the Service area.

This action has been completed. We have prepared a Fleet Decarbonisation Plan which requires the Service to switch all diesel appliances to run on a zero-carbon alternative fuel by 2030.

4. Engage and involve staff in planning for carbon emission reduction to ensure that they take ownership of the Authority's plans for improvement and are fully contributing to the delivery of key actions.

This action is ongoing, and will never be completed. We have established an Environment and Sustainability Working Group which meets monthly and has membership drawn from many different parts of the Service.

The Environment and Climate Change Manager has been featured on multiple occasions within our internal Weekly Brief, and has undertaken regular station visits to meet crews and discuss environmental issues. A presentation and 'Q&A' session about the Environmental Strategy was delivered to all middle managers in the Service in July 2023.

5. Strengthen how progress in delivering actions to reduce carbon emissions and delivery against Welsh Government targets is progressing and resulting in improvement.

This action is ongoing.

Objective 7: To ensure that social value and sustainability are considered, including during procurement processes

Well-being goals met:



Social value is the value that people place on the changes they experience in their lives. During 2022–23, the Authority continued developing its social value and ensured that social, economic and environmental issues were considered as part of its activities, including support for the local Young Firefighters Association (YFAs) and the Phoenix Project.

Action 1: continue to seek out opportunities to add social value to communities.

Fire safety staff from across the Service took part in various activities with their local communities. Not only does this benefit and increase the well-being of local communities, but it allows us to engage with the most vulnerable in the communities and provides us with an opportunity to complete a Safe and Well Check at the same time.

Some examples of these community activities are as follows:

- Home Safety Support Workers helped raised money to install defibrillators in their local community of Dolgellau.
- Service staff attended a Christmas celebration at the African Community centre in Wrexham.
- Food was supplied to local food banks.

As well as other open days and community events across the region, staff took part in the Community Heros day in Wrexham and supported and collaborated with other blue light partners, the military, coastguard and a number of charities, to deliver a community event in Wrexham town centre.

The installation of post-incident Arson Reduction Boards has encouraged communities to report incidents of deliberative fire-setting. In addition, the Arson Reduction Team offered advice in relation to security of derelict buildings and their waste and site management, which can sometimes attract Anti-social behaviour.

Action 2: develop a Social Value and Sustainable Procurement Strategy.

Whilst progress towards agreeing a Social Value and Sustainable Procurement Strategy for the Authority was delayed by the challenges presented by the pandemic, the Service recognises the importance of developing a sustainable and ethical procurement strategy. During 2022–23, the Service appointed an Environment and Climate Change Manager and a Procurement and Contracts Manager who will take the lead on this action.

There is a UK-wide procurement bill reform in progress which is currently going through Parliament; this will then have a further Welsh Government iteration to align with the Wales Social, Sustainability and Environmental goals. This will have to be taken into consideration when developing our own Strategy.

Despite limited progress, sustainability still played a key part in decisions around procurement and purchasing as evidenced in this objective and in objective six. As part of the planning process for adding more fuel-efficient vehicles to the fleet, any tendering process routinely considered the benefit of local suppliers who met Service requirements.

Action 3: explore options for local procurement to be delivered via national / regional collaboration both within the fire and rescue sector and across other blue light agencies.

We continually consider potential local procurement collaborations through All-Wales collaborations or procurement routes such as Blue Light Services. Some recent examples are:

- Corporate uniform refresh tender (All Wales).
- Flash Hood procurement (All Wales).
- Inspection, Maintenance, Calibration & Repair of Workshop Tools & Equipment (All Wales).

Action 4: ensuring that the procurement of new operational equipment includes consideration of 'total end-of-life' disposal.

The Service considers end-of-life disposal for operational equipment at the beginning of the procurement activity and incorporates this into business cases; indeed, any business case we have produced in the last 12 months has incorporated that consideration. Some recent examples of this include:

- Biodegradable bags for storing dirty kit entering the laundry process as part of the contaminants working group.
- Reviewing historical kit.
- Recycling electrical items.
- Procuring environmentally friendly foam which identified a cleaner way of disposal rather than incineration.

Other areas that the operational department is currently considering include day-to-day items such as general packaging, other biodegradable products (barrier tapes etc.) and the potential recycling and repair of current items, where applicable.

Action 5: further develop opportunities to work with 'Fire Aid' to ensure that equipment is recycled where possible.

During May, a donated fire appliance and equipment was driven to Poland by members of the Operations Department and safely handed over to Ukrainian Firefighters as part of the NFCC fire convoy. Another significant donation of a fire engine and firefighting equipment left North Wales in October en route to Ukraine.

September saw an operational firefighter set off on a 4,000-mile journey to Africa to deliver an old fire appliance, rescue boats and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as part as Fire Aid's 'Operation Zephyr'. Upon delivery, time was also spent familiarising those in the area with the equipment.

Action 6: develop a procurement awareness training package.

In-person training and awareness sessions have been carried out within individual departments by the Procurement and Contracts Manager.

This training will be further enhanced when the sourcing and contract management module of the financial system is developed.

Action 7: ensure procurement frameworks and contracts measure social value and sustainability during tendering processes.

All new procurement frameworks and contracts require added weighting in order to measure social value and sustainability. A recent example was that the service advertised an 'Invitation to Tender' via the 'Crown Commercial Service' for Internal Auditing Services. In the scoping document, a 10% weighting was included for social values and sustainability.

Suppliers will have to demonstrate activities to support this action through the application of the Procurement and Policy Note (reference: PPN 06/20) 'Taking Account of Social Value in the award of Central Government Contracts'.

Action 8: promoting social value and sustainability within the Service.

Our Environment and Sustainability Working Group has members from many different parts of the Service, so the measures that we take towards improving sustainability and social value are reported there and fed back to separate departments or working locations.

We recognise the importance of sustainability and social value, and the fact that these concepts are important beyond just legal duties. The Environment and Climate Change Manager works closely with the Principal Officers as well as operational staff to make sure that they are considered in all significant policy decisions.

Monitoring Compliance with Welsh Language Standards

Background

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 replaced the Welsh Language Act 1993 and as part of this legislation, North Wales Fire Authority is required to comply with a set of Welsh Language Standards which ensure the Welsh language is not treated any less favourably than the English language.

The Welsh Language Commissioner issued fire and rescue authorities with their compliance duties on 30 September 2016. This document lists which of the Standards, as listed in full in the Welsh Language Standards Regulations (No.5) 2016, the Authority must comply with, along with any exemptions and their implementation dates.

The Authority is required to publish its Welsh Language Standards annual report for 2022/23 by September 2023 and to publicise it appropriately.

The Authority is committed to ensuring that, in conducting public business in Wales, the English and Welsh languages should be treated on the basis of equality in order to recognise and value the rich diversity of communities, against a backdrop of significant natural and cultural heritage.

The Authority also acknowledges its duty towards its staff, most of whom are residents of North Wales, and who themselves reflect the linguistic and cultural make-up of their own communities.

By acknowledging its moral and legal duties to protect the cultural heritage of the area and meet the expectations of the local community, the Authority continues to work towards ensuring that it conducts its public business in both languages.

The Authority's Implementation Plan is available to view using the link below;
[The Welsh Language Standards](#)

During 2022-23, the Authority continued to comply with the set of Welsh Language Standards issued in the [Compliance Notice of 30 September 2016](#).

It also continues to work collaboratively with external language groups via the Welsh Language Officer, in addition to establishing an internal Welsh Language Governance Group that serves the purpose of;

- Co-ordinating between departments on Welsh Language issues
- Scrutinising and offering guidance to improve any aspect of the bilingual provision of the Service
- Collaborating on how to resolve any challenges or complaints
- Ensuring that the Welsh language is being treated as favourably as the English language within the Service

During 2022-23, the Service was successful in a tender process to secure a translation contract with an external company, in order to help fulfil all obligations set by the Welsh Language Standards.

The Authority also continues to collaborate with colleagues at the two other Welsh fire and rescue services, North Wales Police, and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) in order to share information on best practice.


Compliance with the Welsh Language Standards

Service delivery standards


The Compliance Notice which lists these standards can be seen on the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service website. Arrangements have been made to meet the Service Delivery Standards that have come into force including the following:

Standards 8-17

All staff have been made aware of the requirement to consider the importance of language choice when dealing with telephone calls to and from members of the public, in addition to resources being shared internally on how to promote the use of Welsh at work.



GALL BAWB DDEFNYDDIO'R GYMRAEG YN Y GWEITHLE



SIARADWR CYMRAEG

- Gad i bawb wybod dy fod yn gallu siarad Cymraeg drwy wisgo bathodyn 'Cymraeg' neu 'Dwi'n Siarad Cymraeg'
- Sefydlu arferiad o siarad Cymraeg gydag eraill i greu awyrgyich Gymreig yn y gweithle
- Pan fydd gweithgareddau i hybu Cymraeg, rhannu'r wybodaeth efo eraill
- Bydda'n fentor positif i ddysgwyr sy'n llai hyderus wrth eu hatgoffa bod eu Cymraeg yn grêt!

DYSGWR CYMRAEG

- Gad i bawb wybod dy fod yn dysgu Cymraeg drwy wisgo bathodyn 'Dysgwr Cymraeg'
- Defnyddia dy Gymraeg wrth siarad ag eraill ag eglura dy fod eisiau ymarfer Cymraeg gyda nhw
- Holi eraill yn y gwaith, yr Hyrwyddwr Cymraeg, neu'r Swyddog Iaith am unrhyw syniadau ar sut i ymarfer siarad Cymraeg
- Cofia ei fod yn iawn i ddefnyddio ambell i air Saesneg wrth ymarfer, fydd hynny'n dy sbarduno i ddysgu'r gair Cymraeg erbyn tro nesaf

PAWB

- Defnyddio llofnod e-bost dwyieithog a chyfarch gyda 'Bore Da' neu 'Su' Mae'
- Gosod neges 'Allan o'r Swyddfa' yn ddwyieithog
- Ateb y ffon yn Gymraeg ac yna'n Saesneg fel eich bod yn cynnig dewis iaith
- Sicrhau bod eich lefel iaith wedi ei gofnodi a'i fod yn gyfredol gyda'r Adran Adnoddau Dynol - os na cawsoch asesiad iaith rhochwch wybod i'r Adran Hyfforddiant

RHEOLWYR

- Rhannu gwybodaeth fewnol e.e. Bwletin 'Mercher' Marfer, Y Golofn Gymraeg yn y Fflam, unrhyw ddigwyddiadau gyda staff
- Anfon negeseuon allweddol allan yn ddwyieithog
- Sicrhau bod staff wedi cwblhau'r modiwl Ymwybyddiaeth Iaith ac wedi cael asesiad iaith (os oes angen)
- Gosod esiampl drwy ddefnyddio'ch Cymraeg chi hefyd a normaleiddio defnydd anffurfiol o'r Gymraeg yn y gweithle

ATAL AMDDIFFYND YMATEB
PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

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www.northwalesfire.gov.wales



EVERYBODY CAN USE WELSH IN THE WORKPLACE



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

WELSH SPEAKERS

- Let everybody know you can speak Welsh with a 'Cymraeg' or 'Dwi'n Siarad Cymraeg' badge
- Establish Welsh speaking habits with others to create a natural Welsh environment at work
- Share news of any events that are happening to promote the Welsh Language
- Be a positive mentor to any others that are trying to learn Welsh and remind them that their Welsh is great!

Some is better than none



WELSH LEARNERS

- Let everybody know that you're learning Welsh by wearing a 'Dysgwyr Cymraeg' badge
- Use your Welsh when speaking to others and explain that you would like to practise speaking Welsh with them
- Ask others in the workplace, the Language Champion, or the Language Officer about any new ways to practise your Welsh
- Remember it's ok to use an English word in your sentence when learning, you will be inspired to learn that word for the next time you need it.

EVERYBODY

- Use a bilingual E-mail signature and greet people with a 'Bore Da' or 'Su' Mae'
- Use bilingual 'Out of Office' Messages
- Answer the phone in Welsh and then English to ensure you are giving people a choice of language
- Ensure that your language level is recorded and up to date with HR. If you haven't received a language assessment, please make the Training Department aware of this

Say it in Welsh



MANAGERS

- Share internal information with other members of staff i.e. 'Mercher' Marfer, Y Golofn Gymraeg in Y Fflam, and any other relevant information
- Send out key messages to staff bilingually
- Ensure staff have completed the Language Awareness module and completed a Language Assessment (if needed)
- Set an example by using your own Welsh language skills and normalise the use of everyday Welsh in the Workplace

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The Authority recognises the value and benefit of offering language choice and as such has continued to operate a fully bilingual Control Room/Joint Communications Centre, despite there being no statutory requirement to answer 999 calls bilingually. In addition to recognising its moral and ethical duty to deal with 999 calls swiftly and effectively in the caller's language of choice, the Authority's decision to go above and beyond the requirements of the Standards also acknowledges the benefits in terms of safety in emergency situations when some callers are able to communicate more effectively in Welsh as their first language.

Job vacancies in the Control Room are advertised with a Level 4¹ Welsh language skills requirement to ensure an active language choice is offered to any caller wishing to speak Welsh. This year, a [promotional video](#) highlighting the Welsh language skills of our Control room staff was produced to help support recruitment efforts.

Welsh language ability of Level 4 or above is required in order to be able to offer a proactive language choice to any Service users that contact us through the Control Room.

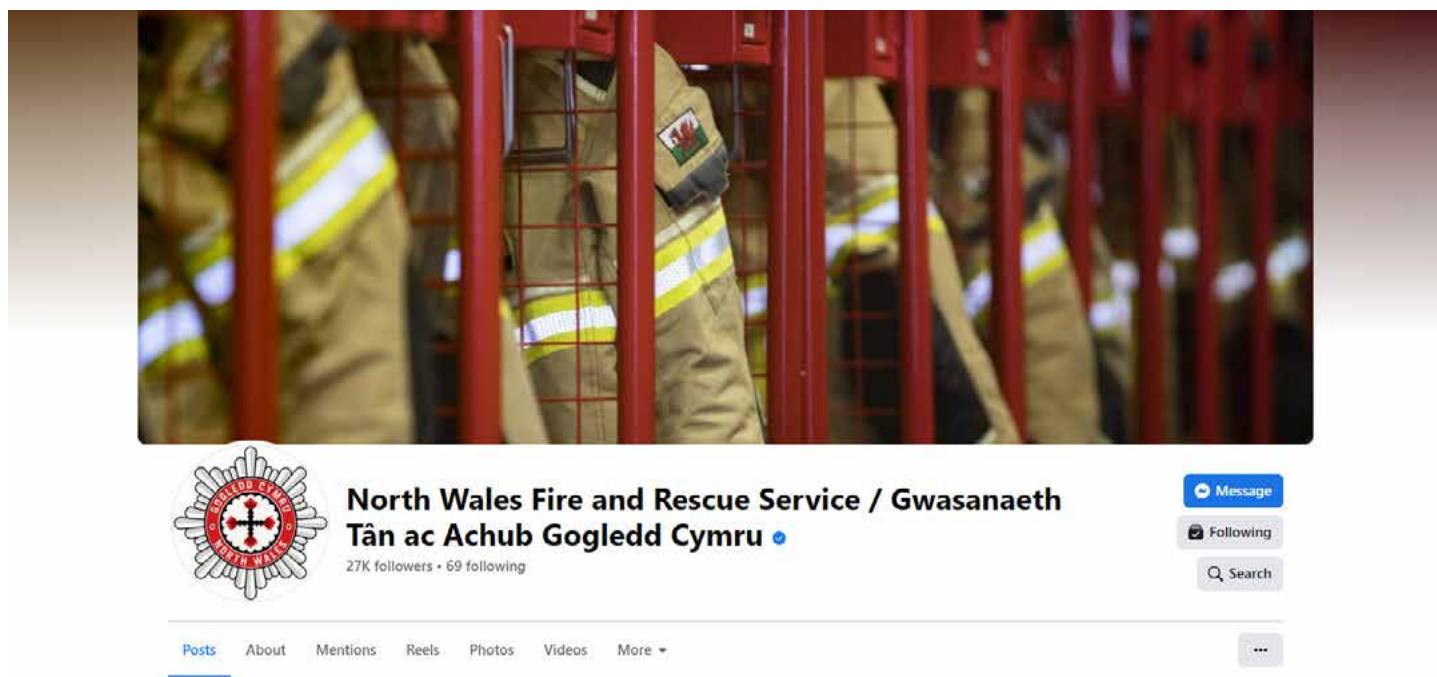
Data is collected on how many service users contact us in Welsh, for monitoring and evaluation purposes. As of 31st March 2023, 373 (2.82%) of calls were handled in Welsh. This is a slight increase in the number of calls handled in Welsh compared to the previous year, however the percentage of the total number of calls remains the same.

¹ The Service standard for Level 4 Welsh skills are as follows: Holding informal conversations in Welsh with fluency, reading and writing fluently with the aid of grammar and spelling software for accuracy.

Training is provided to ensure that staff are able and willing to deal with calls in Welsh. Control operators use a bilingual standard greeting when answering the call, which facilitates people's choice to continue the call in Welsh if they wish. This is regularly promoted on the Service social media and in attended public events in to raise external awareness. The initial contact with the 999-emergency switchboard is monolingual English therefore awareness campaigns seek to counteract and have included videos of our Control staff promoting their work in Welsh - and we continue to explore further campaigns to highlight our bilingual Control operators.

Standards 32, 36, 58-60

All publicly available materials and platforms are displayed bilingually including the Service website and corporate social media accounts. Any posters, leaflets, videos or other promotional material are also bilingual. With the exception of operational signs, all signs are bilingual.



Standards 62-64

Service policy notes that staff with front facing positions must be fluent in the Welsh language (Level 4 and above). There are 34 front facing posts, and 92 members of staff filling these posts. Monitoring these posts helps us identify any potential skills gaps. It has been identified that 6 of these 92 members of staff do not meet the required Welsh language level for their post, and have been employed by the Service after the Welsh language level requirements were set. Recruitment challenges saw a lack of applications from candidates with the required Welsh language skills. These staff are supported on Welsh language matters where the need arises and are also being supported to improve and develop their Welsh language skills. The posts also remain at fluency level for future recruiting.

Standards 73-77

All tender advertisements are bilingual. In relation to the Welsh Language Act, if a supplier prefers to correspond in Welsh this can be arranged; any tender or related documents submitted in Welsh will not be treated less favourably than those submitted in English.

We would issue a tender in Welsh if the need arises e.g. Welsh Language Training. Both languages are treated equally (it is noted that not many tenders are submitted to us in Welsh but sometimes parts are in Welsh). Use of external Welsh language translation services helps compliance with Standard 76.

Operational Standards

The Compliance Notice which lists these standards can be seen on the Service website. Arrangements have been made to meet the Operational Standards that have come into force including the following:

Standards 96-101

Staff have a right, that is regularly promoted and communicated internally, to receive any relevant correspondence in Welsh or bilingually. Relevant forms are available bilingually relating to their employment. Staff can view these on our staff information site.

A record is kept of a staff member's preferred language to receive correspondence in their preferred language.

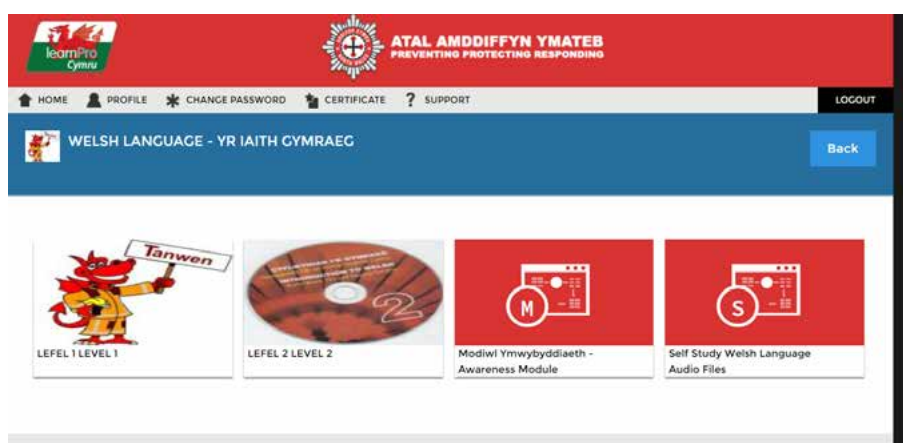
Standards 102 -108

New and revised policies are published internally in both Welsh and English and each policy is required to have an associated integrated impact assessment to ascertain its impact on the Welsh language and to identify and promote ways of creating a positive impact and avoiding negative impact.

Standards 125 – 132

In terms of developing Welsh language skills, as mentioned, we offer Level 1, 2 and 3 training courses using internal Welsh language learning materials. Staff can receive support from a Welsh Language Officer or Welsh Language Champion. Conversation sessions are offered, and 1-to-1 sessions to promote and support staff to develop their Welsh language skills. Due to the nature of the Service and its operational staff, in 2023 Welsh language learning groups are now established on fire stations in order to allow operational staff an opportunity to develop their Welsh skills.

Welsh language learning courses are offered to all staff through the Learn Welsh service and through Coleg Cambria. Language Awareness training is offered in two ways; first face-to-face, usually for operational staff joining in groups. Secondly, an online module is provided through LearnPro on Language Awareness.



The requirement to include the Welsh language on e-mail signatures and out of the office messages is promoted internally. Examples are available on our information site along with relevant logos. In terms of training, essential and desirable modules are available bilingually on our LearnPro online training system.

Standard 143

Complaints are monitored and dealt with by the Human Resources (HR) Department and Business Support Unit. Complaints and letters of appreciation are reported annually to the Fire Authority. No complaints were received in 2022–23 in relation to the Welsh language. North Wales Fire and Rescue Service has published a complaints procedure on its website and also has an internal policy for staff on how to raise a concern or complaint.

Standard 147

As of 31 March 2023, 84% of staff were able to demonstrate that they had Welsh language skills (Level 1 and above), 37% of whom were classed as fluent speakers (Level 4 and 5). This has increased slightly from 36% in the previous year despite a number of fluent Welsh speaking staff retiring. 96% of staff had either a formal or self-assessment recorded for their Welsh skills. Staff that have been employed for less than their probationary period may not yet have been assessed.

Standards 150, 151

In the past, the language ability level of new candidates joining the Service was assessed at the interview shortlisting stage, but more recently owing to the throughput of candidates and the availability of resources to conduct assessments, successful candidates who are offered posts are assessed to confirm their Welsh language level and establish how much support they will require to reach the required level during their probationary period. The aim is for this to happen in the first few weeks of their employment if they have not had an assessment during the recruitment process.

Self-learning resources are available in addition to further training courses in the event that staff are finding difficulty progressing their skills.

This method has successfully seen those staff joining with little or no Welsh ability being able to reach Level 2 and 3, and a select few reaching gaining Welsh fluency (Level 4 or 5).

Recent appointments and promotions

Following a whole-time firefighter recruitment period in Autumn 2022, 24 new firefighters were appointed. Out of these, 14 did not meet (some have not been assessed for confirmation) the required level on appointment and have a two-year time period as part of their development plan to achieve the required level of Welsh skills.

During the Area Manager, Group Manager, Station Manager, Watch Manager and Crew Manager promotions boards, 26 appointments were made across these levels and three of these did not meet the required level of Welsh skills on appointment. This will be achieved in a set time frame as condition of their contract.

There were also five new members of staff appointed to the Control Room and all were at the required standard of Welsh fluency (level 4) for the front facing role.

In addition, 37 staff were appointed to green book support staff roles and 30 of these new staff appointed met the Welsh level required for the role upon appointment.



Monitoring, promoting and developing the Welsh language within the service

Monitoring and promoting the Welsh language among staff is delivered internally in a variety of different ways including. The services available in Welsh for the public are also promoted and highlighted through external campaigns.

The HR monitoring system, iTrent, is used to keep track of Welsh language ability of staff, including their level of ability (on a scale of 0-5 with 4 being fluent) and monitoring Welsh Language assessments (either formal or self-assessment). Staff are encouraged to show that they speak Welsh by wearing an appropriate pin badge. This helps members of staff to know with whom they may speak Welsh.

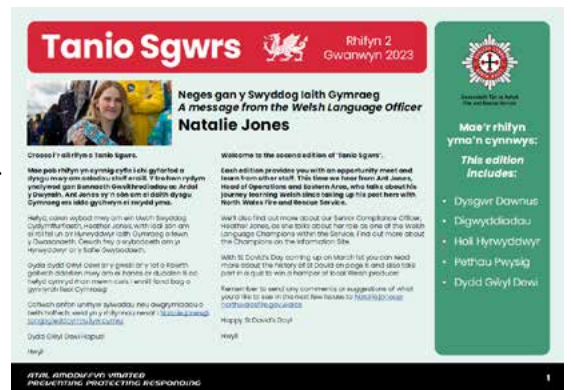


- The Welsh Language Champions scheme offers a financial allowance for staff members that commit to promoting the Welsh language within their departments or fire stations. Welsh Language Champions are spread across the Service areas and departments and facilitate the promotion of using Welsh at work, support staff with Welsh language assessments, and promote Welsh language activities with other staff. The Welsh Language Champions are rewarded for their efforts and submit a quarterly task form noting their achievements in order to receive an allowance. There were 4 new Welsh Language Champions added to the list in the past year.



- The internal 'Welsh Wednesday' monthly bulletin shares information about the Welsh language to staff, including about learning Welsh and using Welsh more on a day to day basis. Also included within is a section informing staff of key Welsh language standards and ways they can ensure compliance e.g. bilingual e-mail signatures and out of office messages.

- From Winter 2022 onwards, a new internal Welsh newsletter 'Tanio Sgwr's was launched which is published on a quarterly basis. The aim of this newsletter is to encourage staff to read Welsh with the assistance of a guide or glossary of terminology. 'Tanio Sgwr's' features articles by staff, particularly the Welsh language champions and Welsh learners from around the Service. It also presents a means of sharing share news and events about local Welsh initiatives and celebrations in an attempt to highlight where speakers can use their Welsh language skills more often.



- During December 2022, the Service took part in a national social media campaign to promote Welsh Language Rights Day and promote its commitment to ensuring that staff are aware of their rights in regards to the Welsh language. Staff took part in this by appearing in new promotional posters showing the public what services can be accessed in Welsh. In addition, regular social media posts are scheduled to raise awareness about our bilingual services. For promotion internally, a staff video was produced to serve as a clear guide as to what the Welsh language standards mean for people who work for the Service.



- The Welsh Language Officer took part in a bilingual promotional video to encourage Welsh speakers to apply for a post that required fluency in Welsh. In a video explaining more about the role of a Compliance Officer, as a role that requires Welsh fluency, the Welsh Language Officer added that the importance of strong Welsh skills is imperative to the role as they deal with the public and local business owners that have the right to use Welsh when dealing with the Service.

- A Weekly Welsh drop-in session is available on Microsoft Teams each Friday at 12pm for staff who wish to have a chance to use Welsh with another staff member or for any help or advice to do with Welsh language development. The Welsh Language Officer also offers 1-2-1 Welsh speaking sessions with all members of staff to help build confidence and prepare staff to use their Welsh with others within the Service. In 2023, this has been extended to include group sessions with operational staff at their stations. A watch can request a Welsh development group to be arranged for them whilst on duty.



- Attendance at Welsh community events such as the National Eisteddfod in Llŷn and Eifionydd, 2023, allows our staff to experience Welsh cultural events and also helps to engage with Welsh speaking communities. It also serves as an opportunity to work on the Service Eisteddfod stall and make use of their Welsh language skills with members of the public, especially as it was held in a traditional Welsh language heartland this year.



- Engagement with staff during Welsh national events. This year (2023) on St. David's Day, a Welsh themed competition, advertised in the new 'Tanio Sgwrs' newsletter, was held for staff with an opportunity to win local Welsh produce. This encouraged engagement from across the Service and acted as an incentive for staff to read and share the newsletter. Members of staff also attended St. David's events such as the parade in Wrexham.

- A Welsh 'Paned a Sgwrs' (cuppa & chat) session was also held by the Service's Welsh Language Champions in order to allow Welsh speakers and learners from across the Service to establish Welsh connections with other staff.



- There is also a 'Contribution to the Welsh Language' award in the Service's annual Community Awards Ceremony where a member of staff that has shown dedication to the Welsh language can be rewarded. This year the award was given to Brian Holmes, Partnership and Communities Manager – West Area, to recognise his committed efforts to learning Welsh since joining the Service.
- The number of Home Safe and Well Checks (SAWCs) conducted through the medium of Welsh has risen this year to 1,802. There was however a decrease in the percentage of Welsh checks as a proportion of all checks to 10.1%. In comparison with previous years, it is noted that take up of the offer of a SAWC in Welsh is gradually decreasing yearly. Following an historic campaign promoted by the Welsh Language Board, the predecessor of the Welsh Language Commissioner, in 2011, the percentage of checks carried out in Welsh reached a high of 20% in 2012. To help improve on the number of checks conducted in Welsh, more targeted efforts are being introduced to promote the availability of Welsh SAWCs, paying particular attention to highlighting language choice with the agencies that make SAWC referrals to the fire and rescue service.

Welsh Language Development

The Training and Development Department maintains a record of all the Welsh courses attended and assessments undertaken by employees, and records the results on its internal recording system.

Following a Welsh language assessment, the ability of staff is subsequently recorded onto the iTrent system, where internal staff information is stored such as leave requests and timesheets.

The Training and Development Department also facilitates internal Welsh courses provided by Coleg Cambria, and members of staff are encouraged to request courses during their annual appraisal.

The use of Welsh is also encouraged amongst staff on social media, especially on individual fire station social media accounts. Key phrases and a social media toolkit are available to highlight the importance of including Welsh in posts or tweets on these accounts.

The Authority will continue to concentrate its efforts on encouraging more applications from Welsh speakers as well as encouraging people to be confident when noting their linguistic skills.

The Authority will also continue to look at new ways of engaging with its communities to highlight the Welsh language services on offer and emphasise that Welsh is a valued skill in its workplace. Over the past 12 months, the Welsh Language Officer has visited schools across North Wales, taking part in career events to promote the Welsh language with secondary school students. These sessions were arranged by Careers Wales and the individual schools that expressed interest for their year 9 and 10 students to gain insight

into how they would use their Welsh language skills outside of the classroom and in their future careers. These events are invaluable in promoting and reinforcing the value of Welsh as a workplace skill and take place in addition to usual programmed school visits to highlight fire safety messages.

Opportunities

Data from the 2021 Census tells us that 34% of the population in North Wales are Welsh speakers, and 37% have some skills in Welsh; this can be the ability to understand but not speak Welsh, read but not speak Welsh and more. With 37% of our Fire and Rescue Service staff being fluent Welsh speakers, the bilingual capacity of the Service's workforce surpasses the bilingual landscape of North Wales and ensures that a competent bilingual service is provided to all.

The following priorities and opportunities have been identified:

- Continuing with the provision, as capacity allows, of Welsh development groups for operational staff at fire stations. Normalising and facilitating the informal use of Welsh will enable Welsh speaking staff to use Welsh more often.
- Identifying staff that have no Welsh language skills recorded and liaising with them, offering support and encouraging them to ensure any gaps are filled in the data we hold.
- Working to help raise the Welsh skill level of staff that have a recorded level less than level 2 by offering support with development and assessments, utilising the Welsh Language Champions to facilitate this.
- Helping staff to adopt more informal Welsh language use with their colleagues in order to ensure they are confident and able Welsh speakers.
- Liaising with external agencies to ensure they are considering language choice when making referrals for home safe and well checks - more campaigning and awareness raising of the bilingual service is required to increase the level of checks undertaken in Welsh.

Progress Against Strategic Equality Objectives 2022–2023

What the Act requires the Authority to do

The Equality Act (2010) requires the Authority to write an equality plan every four years. The Authority's Strategic Equality Plan 2020–2024 identifies five priorities. These priorities are broken down into six equality objectives that the Authority wants to help bring about to make Wales a fairer place to live. The aim of the Equality Act is to ensure that everyone has the right to:

- Promote the equality of opportunity.
- Foster good relations.
- Eliminate discrimination.

The categories for the objectives are based on the area headings in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's "How Fair is Wales" document. These headings also align with the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network Strategic Equality Plan; this enables joint objectives to be included in individual public sector organisations' strategic equality plans.

Having identified these objectives, the Authority has a duty to take all reasonable steps to pursue them and to report publicly after the end of each financial year on the progress it has made. The Equality Act lists a number of characteristics which must be taken into consideration when determining the actions to be undertaken. These are the 'protected characteristics' which include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and/or belief, sex (Gender) and sexual orientation. Socioeconomic status is also protected in Wales.

A number of processes and practices have been used to develop the Authority's strategic equality objectives:

- Equality Impact Assessments.
- Combined improvement and risk reduction planning objectives.
- Business plans from Heads of Departments.
- Existing strategies and plans, and
- Outcome of EDI related campaigns and engagement activities.

Legislation allows for the objectives to be changed at any time, therefore ongoing evaluation is undertaken to ensure objectives remain current. The Authority continuously examines the most effective methods of communication via engagement with all relevant stakeholders. The Authority is required to publish this assessment of its own performance for 2022–23.

Priority 1 – Life and Health

Equality Objective 1

Reduce dwelling fires and associated casualties through a comprehensive prevention strategy that specifically targets people living in North Wales who can be shown to be at greater risk because they may share one or more particular characteristic.

Working to achieve this objective, the Authority has:

- NWFRS continues to deliver against its targets. Partnership Managers continue to engage with the most at-risk people in our communities and for the first time ever as an authority we are able to report that we did not attend a fatal for a full financial year, with our last fire death being in April 2022.
- NWFRS continues to increase the number of partnerships with community groups, places of worship and charities in the past year. These partnerships have led to our staff connecting with more people from diverse backgrounds and more people have received key safety information, especially those from 'at risk' groups who we can later engage and support.
- Using data, community profiling and referral methodology, our service has been able to use protected characteristics to identify groups of people that are at an increased risk of fire in the home. This approach has helped us target some equality interest groups and adapt the ways we communicate with them as a means of keeping them safe. For example, we are working closely with the Jewish community to promote key safety messages ahead of the holiday season which sees hundreds of Jews visit and spend time in North Wales. We have engaged with the Muslim community in the North East Wales area to promote fire safety around observances.
- NWFRS ongoing collaboration agreement with Care and Repair continues to deliver direct access to the most 'at risk' people in the community. NWFRS has almost returned to pre-Covid activity levels.



Priority 2 – Employment

Equality Objective 2

Through our own employment practices, programmes and schemes, we aim to increase the employment prospects of people who might otherwise find it difficult to gain equal access to the world of work. We will prioritise action to advance gender equality in North Wales.

Working to achieve this objective, the Authority has:

- Recruitment Information Packs have been created and are bespoke for each vacancy. They include information on the Welsh language requirements, the daily duties of the role, and the person to contact for further information. The aim of these booklets is to provide all the information an applicant would require in one place, as well as highlight a point of contact.
- A North Wales Fire Careers page has been created on Facebook to advertise upcoming and current vacancies across the Service, with all posts created bilingually in compliance with Service Guidelines and Welsh Language Standards. The page went live in early February 2023 and within a month of the page going live it has gained 173 followers. A post highlighting what a typical day in Control room looked like was

posted in order to gain interest in the Firefighter Control vacancies and reached 17,989 people with 1,521 people engaging with it. Once the vacancies went live, the post advertising the vacancy reached 24,452 people, and 2,093 people engaged with the post, resulting in 20 applications for the vacancy (compared to 8 received during the previous campaign). The aim of the page is to raise the profile of Green Book roles and encourage more application whilst also supporting recruitment of grey book roles as and when required.



- HR staff have utilised their own social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to promote any upcoming Green Book vacancies to gather interest ahead of the vacancies going live. This approach has helped promote career opportunities through other HR and recruitment contacts.
- Attendance at recruitment events has resumed as many in person recruitment events and job fairs have restarted across the region. Applications have been at a reduced level since the Coronavirus pandemic and attending these events has allowed the Service to engage with job seekers in our local communities and promote the great opportunities on offer. It also gives the HR team the opportunity to discuss with potential applicants any barriers they may be experiencing so these can be reviewed and addressed where possible. For example, the HR team have attended Welsh speaking jobs fair in Bangor to promote vacancies within Fire Safety and Control room, where Welsh language is an essential requirement of the role. Following the service re-structure, the service has appointed dedicated Recruitment and Availability Managers in each of the three areas.
- HR have also worked with the Corporate Communications department to produce short social media videos to promote roles and vacancies within the Service, particularly aimed at improving engagement with Welsh speakers and explaining why Welsh language is needed for some roles and removing barriers to applicants where Welsh is not essential as a day one skill.
- NWFRS have supported the Chair of our Firepride to attend regional LGBTQ+ networking events. This engagement has connected us with local people and this is useful for when the Service want to promote key safety messages and recruitment. Our Firepride network have been actively supporting recruitment events at local leisure centres and pride events.



Priority 3 – Education

Equality Objective 3

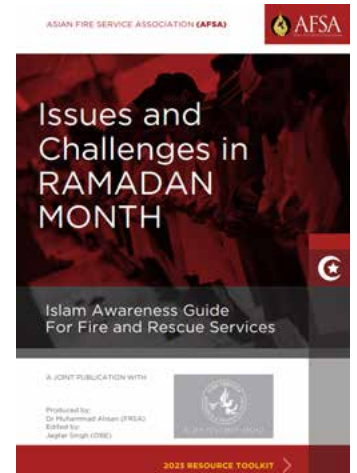
We will progress an inclusive culture where leaders and staff demonstrate their commitment to promoting equality and support for a fair and inclusive workforce.

Working to achieve this objective, the Authority has:

- Recruited two Corporate Policy Development Managers who have been working through a policy review which involves re-formatting existing HR policies and procedures. HR specialists are continuing to review the content of our policies, including those relating to discipline, attendance management, grievance, recruitment as well as others. The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is also reviewed once the policy review is in its final stage.
- Two documents have been produced to support line managers with the steps required when conduct matters arise in the workplace:
 - ◆ **Conduct Flowchart:** The flow chart is guidance for managers and details the steps that should be undertaken when dealing with conduct matters (from the initial notification of a conduct issue to the completion of an investigation report).
 - ◆ **Initial Fact-Finding Form:** The initial 'fact-finding' form was devised as a preliminary step in determining whether a disciplinary investigation is warranted and is used to obtain objective information to aid in determining whether the event merits a more detailed investigation and whether suspension is necessary.
- An anti-sexual harassment policy has been drafted in order to set out the behaviours and expectations of employees and volunteers. The policy also provides guidance to managers on how to deal with complaints of sexual harassment.
- A confidential 'speak up' service is being procured to provide an anonymous means, through an external provider, for employees to report any serious concerns they have regarding inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour or misconduct.
- A guide for employees has been formulated to help translate the Core Values and expectations of the Service into the way that employees should act. The document details the Service's aspirations in terms of the Core Values and signposts employees to policies that can provide further information when issues arise.
- NWFRS take the safety of our staff and communities very seriously, which is why we require all staff to undertake a DBS or Vetting check prior to employment, and request that staff disclose any criminal convictions during the recruitment process and throughout their career with the Service. This initial work means that from 1st May 2023, the Service will be reviewing staff DBS and Vetting status every three years. The Service will be implementing an amnesty in April 2023 and during this time, any staff member who has not previously disclosed involvement with the Police will have the opportunity to do so without being subject to disciplinary action for breach of contract due to non-disclosure. Any disclosed convictions will be considered on a case by case basis in line with our core values and disciplinary handbook.
- NWFRS have established three new staff networks to focus on religion, ethnicity and cultural heritage; neurodiversity; and parents and carers. These new networks

complement the existing 'Women in the Fire Service' and 'Firepride' networks which enable staff to meet regularly to raise concerns and share ideas to how the service can improve. Some of the staff networks have a senior sponsor and this has reinforced the relationship between senior leaders and staff members.

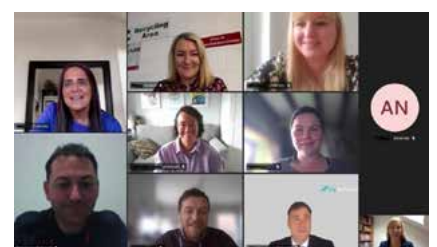
- NWFRS produced new guidance in March 2023 relating to supporting Muslim colleagues during Ramadan. Similar EDI guidance documents will be developed throughout 2023-24 to create a suite of resources that help raise awareness and enable our people to create a more supportive and inclusive workplace culture. The promotion of guidance documents from external sources also aids cultural awareness and staff development.



- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer delivered a half day session at the supervisory and middle managers combined EDI and leadership Conference in March 2023. This session focused on inclusive practices, workplace culture and leadership theory.



- NWFRS have continued to provide specific EDI training for staff relating to LGBTQ+ inclusion, unconscious bias, neurodiversity and gender equality. This training has helped raise awareness and introduced new concepts to staff. For example, during March 2023, the Service promoted 'Neurodiversity Celebration Week 2023' and this campaign featured multiple informal learning materials include video links, guidance documents and case studies.
- Initial dyslexia screening was introduced to staff in September 2022. Screening has enabled staff to develop self-awareness and the service have considered and implemented some basic reasonable adjustments. A more detailed screening tool has been explored in recent months to ensure the service considers the different ways that staff learn, process and receive information. In line with the Equality Act 2010, this process proactively helps NWFRS identify reasonable adjustments which enable staff to perform to the best of their ability.
- Further work has been completed to ensure the service reduces the gender pay gap. With this gap closing as a result of more women being recruited into the service, including into operational roles, with many of them being successful in recent promotional processes. Gender gap data for 2022-23 has been submitted to the government and the relevant narrative has been included in an annual report which has been published on our website as per the legislative reporting requirements.
- The EDI Officer has attended various forums including the 'AGE in the Workplace' Network during 2022-23 which has been organised by the Business in the Community and Age Cymru. This network has enabled our service to share and identify best practice, policy and processes in terms of creating an inclusive workplace for older people.



- In the past year, NWFRS have become members of the Asian Fire Service Association. Our staff attend their executive committee meetings which enables us to identify best practice. Our staff also benefit hugely from attending the annual AFSA conferences which enable networking and learning around race equality and other interconnecting equality related themes.
- NWFRS have also continued our membership with the Women in the Fire Service and staff attended their annual development weekend in June 2022.
- NWFRS have been actively attending the all-Wales EDI Meetings alongside our counterparts from Mid and West Wales and South Wales Fire and Rescue Services. The first meeting was held in Newtown on Thursday 9th February 2023. This forum enables each Service to provide updates on key priorities, share resources and collaborate together. Meetings will take place on a quarterly basis.
- The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Stewart Forshaw and the quality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Benji Evans attended the NFCC Culture Conference in March 2023. Various speakers highlighted concerns relating to workplace culture in the fire and rescue sector. The London Fire Brigade Culture Review and subsequent culture reports from NFCC and HMICFRS have outlined key actions and recommendations for the FRS sector to consider. As a service, we have used the recommendations to inform our future planning.
- The Employment Monitoring Report will be published in the Autumn of 2023. This includes all employment data identified by the Welsh Specific Equality Duty 2011 ensuring this is reported by contract type, permanent and fixed-term contracts, full-time, part-time and other flexible working arrangements. This information enables the authority to monitor the diversity of its workforce and plan positive action activity accordingly.



Equality Objective 4

Through a comprehensive programme of tailored education and advice provided singly and in collaboration, to empower people living, working and visiting North Wales to continue to reduce their own level of risk from fire and other hazards throughout the different stages in their lives.

Working to achieve this objective, the Authority has:

- The number of schools engaged in the 2022-23 financial year are 74 primary schools and 45 secondary schools. This has resulted in 7,324 primary school children and 8,590 secondary school children receiving key safety information.
- In addition to this the NWFRS educationalists have delivered to 20 young farmers, 20 pony club members, 340 young people in seven station visits, 25 students from the Girls' Brigade and 30 home schooled children in one visit.

- The Educationalists have provided two fire setters intervention and 10 sessions of Olivia's Story to 750 students. This means that the Educationalists have provided key safety information to 18,001 children and young people in 139 engagements.



- Additional impacts of this engagement mean that young people are developing their own resilience to ensure they are safer in their home, on the road and in their communities.

- NWFRS in collaboration with road safety partners and the other Welsh Fire and Rescue Services deliver a road safety intervention called Olivia's Story is aimed at reducing those killed and seriously injured on the road, and in particular, young drivers. North Wales Police deliver Oliver's Story to all secondary schools and NWFRS deliver to further education establishments such as colleges, and to apprentices in workplaces, such as Airbus. In the past year, over 5,107 young people and young drivers have received this intervention.



- In the previous year, our service has adopted some resources developed by Dangerpoint Education Activity Centre and the CSSEF charity. These resources have widened access for school age children who are deaf and hard of hearing to access key safety information. The service will also continue to develop a range of resources that we access via the StayWise Cymru education platform.
- A comprehensive mapping exercise has been conducted to identify equality interest groups across North Wales. This intelligence has enabled our service to target certain groups by adopting appropriate communication and engagement methodology. This piece of work has led to us working in partnership with local community groups and charities which has led to our Service being able to promote our key safety messages. For example, our work with North Wales Women's Centre has enabled us to connect with many women who are often the primary care giver. People who live alone are at an increased risk of fire in the home, so working with women's groups helps us connect with a group of people that happen to make up 90% of single parents in the area.

Priority 4 – Personal Safety

Equality Objective 5

Reduce the risk of death or injury from fires in North Wales by the provision of effective prevention and protection services and emergency fire and rescue response.

Working to achieve this objective, the Authority has:

- Continued to deliver training in Welsh language to staff, with a view to continue with a training plan for new starters and refresher training for existing members of staff. Welsh speakers in the workforce enable our staff to communicate key safety messages, attend community events, receive emergency calls and to effectively respond to emergencies.

- All staff access and complete Mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) e-learning to introduce (and refresh) basic knowledge. In addition, all staff complete bespoke EDI training has been developed for each department to provide best practice when engaging with external stakeholders. This training was delivered to Home Safety Support Workers in the East area in February 2023 along with staff from our arson reduction team. This training covers all types of discrimination, harassment and abuse with specific case studies relating to safety in the home which consider intersectionality. Further delivery of this training will commence throughout 2023-24.



- To further develop our understanding around the specific needs of the victims of domestic violence from underrepresented groups, NWFRS is working to revalidate our White Ribbon accreditation. Initial work has been undertaken in recent months to reconnect with relevant partners on the back of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Partnership working with local support groups and charities will enable our service to better support victims of domestic abuse that we come into contact with.

- Partnership managers are given the autonomy to be innovative with their solutions to prevention activity. One pilot project involved installing new fire detection devices in the kitchens of 17 'at risk' people, which happened to be older residents living within different high-rise buildings in Flintshire. Data captured from the devices found that 18 potential kitchen fires were avoided because the devices turned off the cooker when the sensors indicated a person had left cooking unintended for a period of time, the cooker was too hot or when food/oil was burning. This creative prevention activity is saving the lives of our most 'at risk' people. Plans to broaden the pilot to more residents is planned for 2023-24.



- NWFRS is essentially back to pre-pandemic engagement levels and methods e.g. face to face. This has resulted in a positive level of engagement with local businesses.

Priority 5 – Participation and Communication

Equality Objective 6

By being open and accountable about what we do and what our plans are, encourage more people to involve themselves in the process of determining the way fire and rescue services are delivered in North Wales, and aim to increase the range of representative voices that contribute to that process.

Working to achieve this objective, the Authority has:

- NWFRS staff have been actively participating in the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network and All Wales EDI Group which meet bi-monthly and quarterly respectively. These forums help to share best practice and resources and collaborate on organising

training, events and other engagement related activities. Attraction and recruitment into the public sector have been a key focus during 2022-23.

- NWFRS Partnership Managers have been very active maintaining existing partnerships and building new relationships to ensure the Service promotes key safety messages to the most at-risk people in North Wales. For example, many new projects have been established during 2022-23 including 'walk and talk' sessions that were developed in conjunction with the national trust to engage with older people with dementia. Similar sessions have been developed with Parkinsons Group and Lymphedema Support Group. This specific engagement helps target people in the 'at risk' category and their wider family members which provides feedback that we use to evaluate and shape our service delivery.



- Specific engagement with colleagues at the North East Wales Interfaith Forum has enabled our service to connect more effectively with religious and humanistic groups. These networks have been useful to communicate key safety messages to older people who are a target audience concerning fire in the home, whilst reaching out to people who celebrate and observe religion benefit from fire safety information relating to cooking, lighting bonfires, lanterns, candles and oil burners.



- The introduction of some additional religious celebrations and observances in our campaigns calendar have been communicated via the website and social media platforms. Collaborations with external partners has enhanced our social media reach across North Wales and beyond through sharing, reposting and liking of posts.



- Staff from the service's Firepride network are active members of North Wales Pride and they attended their annual pride event in Bangor (June 2022) and multiple virtual and physical meetings throughout 2022-23. This engagement has enabled the service to connect with LGBTQ+ communities, communicate key safety information and seek feedback on various matters and work streams.



- NWFRS have attended the Arfon Access Group which reformed in February 2023. This group helps our service connect with a broader network of people with a disability in Gwynedd and Anglesey to communicate information and seek feedback.

- Community safety staff have also been engaging more with food banks and a cost of living campaign was launched across Wales in the winter month with regular messaging on social media – to target vulnerable groups impacted by the current cost of living crisis and from those who are seldom heard in our communities.
- Accessibility improvements have been made to our website to ensure we maintain the standards required and community members find information accessible. Our staff are receiving website accessibility training to ensure that we maintain standards going forward.
- Increased engagement with ethnic minority groups across North Wales have enhanced our reach to some seldom heard people. Actively attending community-based events which are organised by ethnic minority groups and other equality interest groups goes some way to engage and build up a rapport with people that often don't often have a voice. NWFRS sponsored the inaugural Black History Month events held in Wrexham and Bangor in October 2022. Staff also attended Christmas events and multicultural events in February 2022. These events enable staff to engage with African, Caribbean, Portuguese and various other ethnic minority groups that attended.
- During 2022–23, the services Equality, Impact Assessment (EqIA) template was updated to include socio-economic duty, welsh language, geography, a section to highlight any potential impact against on-call staff and 'other' equality interest groups. This new template uses a score matrix which assesses the 'likeliness' and potential 'impact' so there is a clear measure of the risk which enables mitigation to take place. Staff across different departments have completed EqIA training. This training will continue to be delivered to staff throughout 2023–24.



In accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, our annual Gender Pay Gap report and employment information in respect of employees and applicants between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023 have been published on our website.

To promote equality of opportunity and accessibility, please contact our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer, if you require this report in large print, different language or alternative format.

Performance Information Summary

The Fire and Rescue Authorities (Performance Indicators) (Wales) Order 2015 introduced three statutory performance indicators that accompany locally collected sector indicators.

STATUTORY INDICATORS:	Year 1 of our Plan		Year 2 of our Plan		Year 3 of our Plan	
	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Fires attended	1,879	26.71	2,011	29.27		
False alarms attended	2,517	35.79	2,674	38.92		
Road traffic collisions	207	2.94	234	3.41		
Other emergency incidents attended	751	10.68	977	14.22		
Where the rate is based on 10,000 population						
Fire deaths and injuries	58	8.25	40	5.82		
Deaths and injuries arising from fires started accidentally	50	7.11	35	5.09		
Where the rate is based on 100,000 population						
Dwelling fires confined to room of origin	375	87.62%	330	86.84%		
As a percentage of the number of dwelling fires attended						

Sector indicators were introduced for 2015 and agreed to be collected and shared by all three Fire and Rescue Services in Wales.

SECTOR INDICATORS:	Year 1 of our Plan		Year 2 of our Plan		Year 3 of our Plan	
	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Deliberate fires	472	6.71	519	7.55		
Accidental fires (or motive not known)	1,408	20.02	1,492	21.71		
Where the rate is based on 10,000 population						
Fire related fatalities	7	1.00	0	0.00		
Injuries caused by fires	51	7.25	40	5.82		
Fire related fatalities in accidental dwelling fires	5	0.71	0	0.00		
Fire related fatalities in deliberate dwelling fires	0	0	0	0.00		
Fire related injuries in accidental dwelling fires	39	5.54	26	3.78		
Fire related injuries in deliberate dwelling fires	5	0.71	3	0.44		
Where the rate is based on 100,000 population						
Dwelling fires	429	13.02	380	11.49		
Accidental fires in dwellings	400	12.14	344	10.40		
Deliberate fires in dwellings	29	0.88	36	1.09		
AFA false alarms in dwellings	1,100	33.40	1,165	35.23		
Where the rate is based on 10,000 dwellings						
Fires in non-domestic premises	156	4.74	158	4.70		
AFA false alarms in non-domestic premises	295	8.95	365	10.86		
Where the rate is based on 1,000 non-domestic premises						
Dwelling fires attended where a smoke alarm was not fitted	58	13.52%	50	13.16%		
As a percentage of the number of dwelling fires attended						



The Dwelling Fire Response Charter in 2022-23

During 2012 the three Welsh fire and Rescue Authorities jointly developed an all-Wales Charter to ensure that wherever people live in Wales, they can expect to be helped and supported to remain safe from fire in their homes. They should also be able to expect that if a fire does break out, they will receive a prompt, effective and professional emergency response to their call for assistance.

The Charter makes seven specific commitments that the Fire and Rescue Authority will:

1. Take the lead in driving down the number of dwelling fires that occur and in reducing their impact on people.
2. React quickly and efficiently every time we receive an emergency 999 call to attend a dwelling fire.
3. Attend dwelling fires swiftly and properly equipped to deal with them.
4. Deal with dwelling fires effectively, efficiently and professionally.
5. Help to restore normality to communities in the aftermath of dwelling fires.
6. Investigate the causes of dwelling fires and hold relevant people to account when appropriate to do so.
7. Strive to maintain high standards and improve aspects of what we do.

The following pages provide information about our compliance with these commitments during 2022-23.

For consistency, we use a standard narrative for reporting against the Charter each year, and only update the figures within the narrative framework.

1. We will take the lead in driving down the number of dwelling fires that occur and in reducing their impact on people.

We are committed to taking the lead in maintaining a downward trend in the incidence of dwelling fires and associated casualties in Wales.

In 2022-23 we provided advice and encouragement to people on how they can prevent fires from starting in their home and how they can keep themselves safe from fire. Our prevention activity included delivering 18,052 SAWCs to householders, and 18,001 children and young people at key stages 1 - 4 received a fire safety talk.

During 2022-23 we attended 344 accidental dwelling fires. As a consequence of those fires, there were no recorded fatalities, but 28 people sustained injuries. The number of accidental dwelling fires in the FRA area has trended upwards with 399 accidental fires attended during 2021-22.

The number of accidental dwelling fires in the FRA area over the past five years, has sadly trended upwards.

2. We will react quickly and efficiently every time we receive an emergency 999 call to attend a dwelling fire.

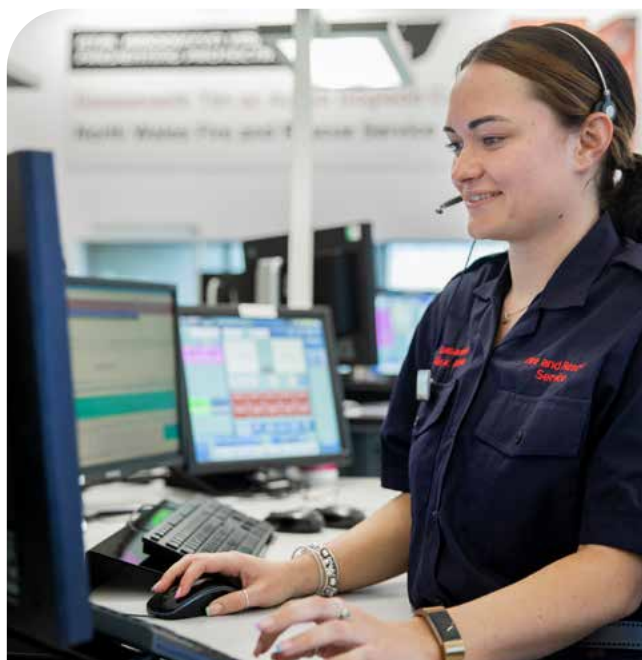
We are committed to reacting quickly and efficiently when emergency 999/112 calls are put through to us by the operator.

Our emergency fire control facility remains available around the clock every day of the year, with special arrangements in place for a seamless transfer of calls from one control facility to another in the event of serious disruption or a surge in the number of calls coming in at the same time.

Sophisticated mapping and electronic systems help us to: a) identify the location of the reported incident and b) send the most appropriate available resource to attend the incident.

In 2022-23, we handled a total of 13,224 emergency 999/112 calls. We were able to obtain enough information about dwelling fire incidents to alert the appropriate initial response within 90 seconds on 86.1% of occasions and between 91 and 120 seconds on 7.8% of occasions.

However, we know that the speed of call handling – although important – is not the only relevant yardstick. Knowing where our services are needed requires specialist skills to effectively glean



information from callers who may, for example, be unfamiliar with the area they are in, be frightened or in distress, be very young, or have communication or language difficulties.

Another important skill is recognising when a caller is abusing the 999/112 system by falsely claiming that there is an emergency when, in fact, there is not. It is a criminal offence to knowingly make false calls to the emergency services. Sadly, that does not seem to deter a minority of people who tie up the 999 lines and divert services away from people who may be in a genuinely life-threatening situation. Every time we turn out to one of these malicious false alarms, it wastes both time and money, and places the rest of the community at higher risk.

In 2022-23, we received 114 malicious false alarms. In 54% of cases, we were able to establish that these calls were not genuine and so avoided needlessly mobilising resources to attend.

3. We will attend dwelling fires swiftly and properly equipped to deal with them.

Once we have answered the emergency 999/112 call and allocated the most appropriate resources to make up the initial attendance at the incident, our next priority is to get to the incident quickly, safely and properly equipped to deal with it.

In 2022-23 we responded to 10% of dwelling fires within 1-5 minutes, 53% within 5-10 minutes, 20% within 10-15 minutes and 17% in over 15 minutes. These times include the time it takes for personnel to turn in to the fire station as well as the travel time. As a result, a number of things can affect the speed of response figures, including the urban/rural geography and the nature of road networks in the area.

Speed of response to dwelling fires is extremely important, but we cannot over-emphasise the importance of preventing those fires from happening in the first instance, and of having at least one working smoke alarm fitted and a pre-planned escape route in case a fire does occur. However, if a dwelling fire has occurred, we ensure that our firefighting crews are properly equipped to deal with it.

We equip our firefighters with high quality personal protective equipment and firefighting equipment. We require them to be operationally fit and healthy and we make sure that their skills are routinely tested and exercised. We also routinely check that the way our crews dealt with incidents was in accordance with accepted firefighting procedures.

We take the safety of our firefighters very seriously, given the nature of the work that they undertake. In 2022-23, our crews attended 2,011 fires in a variety of different types of premises and at outdoor locations. Whilst fighting those fires, eight operational staff received an injury.



4. We will deal with dwelling fires effectively, efficiently and professionally.

We are committed to dealing with fires effectively, efficiently and professionally. To this end, we equip our highly trained fire crews with the right skills, knowledge, information, firefighting equipment and command support so that whatever the circumstances of the dwelling fire, they will be correctly prepared to deal with it.



In 2022-23, of all the dwelling fires that we attended, 87% were successfully contained within the room of origin, without spreading any further. Although a number of factors could contribute to this statistic that would be outside the control of the attending crews such as how long it took for someone to discover the fire in the first instance, whether or not internal doors had been shut to help prevent the spread of the fire, and how far away from a fire station the dwelling was located, we still consider this to be a reasonable indicator of our firefighting success.

We recognise the importance of research and equipment improvements, and ensure that we invest time and effort in staying in touch with the latest developments.

We also take very seriously the professional image of the fire and rescue service. We place great emphasis on the personal qualities and attributes of all our operational staff, as well as their physical and psychological fitness and the high standard of their operational and management training.

We encourage all our staff to adhere to a set of core values that was adopted nationally by the UK Fire and Rescue Service. This expresses our commitment to valuing service to the community, people, diversity and improvement.

5. We will help to restore normality to communities in the aftermath of dwelling fires.

We are committed to helping to restore normality to communities in the aftermath of dwelling fires.

A fire in the home can leave people feeling extremely vulnerable. When people have lost their possessions, they will have need for practical as well as emotional support. When people have been injured or killed in the fire, the experience can affect whole communities as well as the individual and his or her immediate friends and family. For this reason, the fire and rescue service's role in supporting communities does not end when the fire was extinguished and everyone was accounted for.

In all cases, the cause of the fire will be investigated and carefully recorded. Every detail of how and where the fire started, how far it



spread, any special circumstances, and any particular factors that contributed to the fire will be recorded as a source of future learning, research and monitoring.

If there are reasons to believe that a fire was started deliberately in a dwelling, either by someone living there or by someone else, this will be followed up with the police and other relevant agencies.

In some premises, such as blocks of flats or houses occupied by a number of different tenants, the post-incident investigations might indicate that a landlord had failed to ensure the necessary level of fire safety. Our specialist fire investigators might then be involved in a criminal investigation and court proceedings.

If a fire is found to have started accidentally, we might undertake some form of community safety activity or campaign in the vicinity, offering advice and reassurance by way of free SAWCs.

6. We will investigate the causes of dwelling fires and hold relevant people to account when appropriate to do so.

We always investigate the causes of dwelling fires. In many cases the cause and origin of a fire will be very clear and straightforward, but in others a more in-depth, forensic investigation will be required to ascertain the most likely cause of the fire. In 2022-23, 18 dwelling fires were recorded as having an unknown cause.

If a crime is suspected, the investigation of the fire will be conducted with the police. People suspected of deliberately setting fire to a dwelling are likely to face criminal prosecution, although in some cases this may not be the only course of action available, for example if the fire was started by a young child or by a person attempting suicide.

In 2022-23, we attended 380 fires in dwellings, of which 36 were found to have been started deliberately.

In some residential premises, such as flats and houses of multiple occupation, the communal and shared areas are covered by regulations that require whoever is responsible for those premises (such as the landlord or the premises manager) to have good fire safety arrangements in place.

Failure to do so can lead to the closure of the premises and prosecution of the responsible person with the prospect of imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

As an enforcing authority, we ensure that responsible persons fulfil their obligations under this legislation, and can select from a range of enforcement options available to us, depending on the seriousness and risk posed by the contravention.

In 2022-23, we served one Enforcement Notice and one Prohibition Notice. No Formal Cautions or prosecutions were concluded during the year.



7. We will strive to maintain high standards and improve aspects of what we do.

We continuously strive to maintain high standards and improve aspects of what we do.

Under legislation, Fire and Rescue Authorities are classed as 'Welsh Improvement Authorities' and are expected to routinely review and continuously improve their own performance through a formal process of setting, implementing and reporting against annual improvement objectives.

We do not limit our improvement activity to this formal annual process; high standards and continual improvement form an integral part of our everyday running of the Fire and Rescue Service.

Examples of improvement activities that go on include:

- Responding positively to peer reviews, audits and inspections;
- Responding positively to consultation responses, feedback from stakeholders, complaints and compliments;
- Learning from our experiences, such as from post-incident debriefs, reports of accidents, or 'near misses';
- Contributing to working groups, sharing good practice, and learning from research undertaken;
- Taking opportunities to learn from, and with, other organisations through partnerships, committees, boards and professional associations;
- Planning for potential challenges in order to maintain our operations, such as through business continuity management processes;
- Planning for potential challenges to future service delivery, such as through local resilience forums;
- Continuously developing the technical and professional skills of our staff;
- Maintaining and renewing our physical and computerised assets such as our equipment, vehicles, buildings and technology



What Others Said About Us

Audit Wales – False fire alarms reduction

The 2022–23 report stated that The Authority has significantly reduced the number of non-domestic false fire alarms it attends but needs to address financial risks and capacity issues to ensure its risk-based approach is sustainable. We reached this conclusion because:

- The Authority demonstrates a good understanding of the locations, causes and impacts of false fire alarms in non-domestic premises.
- The Authority has a well-embedded policy to address false fire alarms in non-domestic premises and has revised its approach to reflect evolving risks.
- The Authority closely monitors responses to automatic fire alarms and works with partners to address problem premises.

The Authority's policy has resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of false fire alarms it responds to. However, numbers have steadily increased since 2015–16 and Members need to scrutinise future performance in the face of challenging financial pressures.

Audit Wales – Carbon Emissions Reduction

The 2020–21 report concluded that it is unlikely that the Authority will meet its statutory obligations and become net carbon zero by 2030 unless there is a step change in performance. This conclusion was based on two key findings: The Authority does not have an accurate base line position on all its carbon emissions, and, it does not have a comprehensive plan to reduce its carbon emissions and become net carbon zero.

Audit Wales – Review of Involvement 2019–20

The 2019–20 report by Audit Wales focused on the Authority's approach and management of involving stakeholders when proposing service and policy changes, and in the design of activities. The report concluded that the Authority has pockets of good engagement activity but is yet to shift to an integrated strategic approach to involvement.

Audit Wales – Corporate Resilience 2020–21

The most recent report by Audit Wales reviewed the Authority's approach to corporate resilience in order to provide assurance on how well it is addressing the financial and capacity challenges facing public bodies. The report found that the Authority has demonstrated its short-term resilience, but needs to take some major decisions to remain resilient in the future:

- Finance: The Authority has managed budgets well, but some key risks need to be addressed to remain financially sustainable;
- Governance: The Authority has an appropriate governance framework, but Members need to play a more central role in addressing the big risks facing the Fire and Rescue Service;

- **Workforce:** The Authority has a resilient workforce and has dealt well with immediate challenges, but there are some medium-term risks that need to be managed to ensure services are sustainable;
- **Assets:** The Authority has good examples of how it is integrating assets and developing its use of technology, but there are some long standing challenges that need to be addressed to help support future resilience; and
- **Business continuity:** The Authority's business continuity plans helped maintain corporate and operational resilience in responding to the pandemic.

Other Information

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 clarifies the Authority's duties and powers to:

- Promote fire safety
- Fight fires
- Protect people and property from fires
- Rescue people from road traffic accidents
- Respond to other specified risks, such as chemical incidents
- Respond to large scale emergencies such as terrorist attacks.

The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (Wales) Order 2007 and (Amendment) Order 2017 place duties on the Authority in connection with emergencies involving chemical, biological or radioactive contaminants; structural collapse; trains, trams or aircrafts; and flooding and inland water emergencies when they present a risk of death, serious injury or illness.

The **Civil Contingencies Act 2004** requires the Authority to plan for and respond to large scale emergencies that threaten serious damage to human welfare, the environment or to security.

The **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005** requires the Authority to enforce fire safety in non- domestic premises, including the communal parts of blocks of flats and houses in multiple occupation.

Under the **Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009** the Authority must set objectives to continuously improve what it does and publish information about its improvement and performance.

The **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** requires the Authority to work towards improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of future generations of people in Wales, both individually, and as a statutory member of Public Services Boards in North Wales.

The **Equality Act 2010** places duties on the Authority to have due regard to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people with different protected characteristics.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 replaced the Welsh Language Act 1993. As part of the new legislation in Wales the Welsh language has equal legal status with English and must not be treated any less favourably. Public bodies no longer need to develop and implement Welsh Language Schemes and must comply with a set of national Welsh

Language Standards instead.

The UK Data Protection Act 2018 was introduced to modernise data protection laws and meet the needs of an increasingly digital economy and society. It provides a legal framework for data protection, implements GDPR standards across all general data processing and ensures that the UK continues to have appropriate data protection legislation in place after it leaves the EU.

Welsh Government – People and Communities

<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/fire/?lang=en>

Audit Wales

Audit Wales publishes reports on behalf of the Auditor General who is required to assess the likelihood that the Authority will continue to improve and whether the Authority is discharging its duties and acting in accordance with relevant issued guidance. Auditors also work with Fire and Rescue Authorities across Wales to deliver a programme of financial and value-for-money audits.

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External information sources used in compiling this document Wales Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics: Fire incidents (gov.wales) England Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics:

Fire statistics data tables – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Welsh Government Future Trends Report 2017:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2018-12/170505-future-trends-report-2017-en.pdf>

INTERVENTION IN THE EVENT OF FAILURE OR POTENTIAL FAILURE TO COMPLY:

The Welsh Government has powers of intervention:

- under section 22 of the **Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004** if it considers that a Fire and Rescue Authority is failing, or is likely to fail, to act in accordance with the National Framework. In such cases, section 23 – Intervention Protocol would apply.
- under section 29 of the **Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009** if it considers that a Fire and Rescue Authority is failing, or is at risk of failing, to comply with the Measure. However, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, Welsh Ministers may only intervene after they have offered voluntary support to the Authority under section 28 of the Measure.

Consultations

Each year the Authority seeks the opinions and views of the North Wales public and other stakeholders as part of its process of developing its strategic plans and objectives.

Recent consultations are listed below: Staff Family Survey 2021-22 internal survey cross organisation survey and plan to revisit in autumn 2023.

Title	Consultation	Publication	For year
Improvement and Well-Being Objectives for 2020-21 onwards (new Environmental Strategy)	Autumn/Winter 2019	March 2020	2020-21
Improvement and Well-Being Objectives for 2019-20 onwards	Summer/Autumn 2018	March 2019	2019-20
Improvement and Well-Being Objectives for 2018-19 onwards	Autumn 2017	March 2018	2018-19
Improvement and Well-Being Objectives for 2017-18 onwards	Autumn 2016	March 2017	2017-18
Improvement Objectives for 2016-17	Autumn 2015	March 2016	2016-17
Improvement Objectives for 2015-16	Autumn 2014	March 2015	2015-16



Glossary and Definitions

Fires

All fires fall into one of three categories – primary, secondary or chimney.

Primary Fires

These are fires that are not chimney fires, and which are in any type of building (except if derelict), vehicles, caravans and trailers, outdoor storage, plant and machinery, agricultural and forestry property, and other outdoor structures such as bridges, post boxes, tunnels, etc.

Fires in any location are categorised as primary fires if they involve casualties, rescues or escapes, as are fires in any location that were attended by five or more fire appliances.

Secondary Fires

Secondary fires are fires that are neither chimney fires nor primary fires. Secondary fires are those that would normally occur on open land, in single trees, fences, telegraph poles, refuse and refuse containers (but not paper banks, which would be considered in the same way as agricultural and forestry property to be primary fires), outdoor furniture, traffic lights.

Secondary fires do not involve casualties, rescues or escapes, and will have been attended by four or fewer fire appliances.

Chimney Fires

These are fires in occupied buildings where the fire is confined within the chimney structure, even if heat or smoke damage extends beyond the chimney itself.

Chimney fires do not involve casualties, rescues or escapes and will have been attended by four or fewer fire appliances.

Wildfires

A grassland, woodland and crop fire where the incident was attended by four or more vehicles, or the Service was in attendance for six hours or more, or where there was an estimated fire damage area of over 10,000 square meters.

Special Service Incidents (other emergency incidents)

These are non-fire incidents which require the attendance of an appliance or officer and include:

- local emergencies e.g. flooding, road traffic incidents, rescue of persons, 'making safe' etc;
- major disasters;
- domestic incidents e.g. water leaks, persons locked in or out etc;
- prior arrangements to attend incidents, which may include some provision of advice and inspections.

Fire Deaths (fire related)

This is where a person whose death is attributed to a fire even if the death occurred weeks or months later. There are also occasional cases where it becomes apparent subsequently that the fire was not the cause of the death. These figures are therefore subject to revision.

Fire Injuries

For consistency after April 2009 across the UK, fire casualties are recorded under four categories of severity:

- The victim went to hospital, injuries appear to be serious.
- The victim went to hospital, injuries appear to be slight.
- The victim was given first aid at the scene only, but required no further treatment.
- A precautionary check was recommended – the person was sent to hospital or was advised to see a doctor as a precaution, but having no obvious injury or distress.

False Alarm (general guidance)

Where the Fire and Rescue Service attends a location believing there to be an incident, but on arrival discovers that no such incident exists, or existed.

Note: if the appliance is 'turned around' by Control before arriving at the incident it is not classed as having attended and does not need to be reported.

Malicious

These are calls made with the intention of getting the Fire and Rescue Service to attend a non-existent incident, including deliberate and suspected malicious intentions.

Good Intent

These are calls made in good faith in the belief that the Fire and Rescue Service really would attend a fire or special service incident.

Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA)

These are calls initiated by fire alarm and fire-fighting equipment. They include accidental initiation of alarm equipment or where an alarm operates and a person then routinely calls the Fire and Rescue Service as part of a standing arrangement, with no 'judgement' involved, for example from a security call centre or a nominated person in an organisation.

Have your say

We are always looking for ways to improve our service and to present information that is meaningful. In order to help us to do this we want to ensure your views are considered when delivering our activities and keeping you informed. So, if you have any comments about this assessment, or how we might improve our future annual performance assessments, we would very much like to hear from you.

Other versions of this document are available

- In paper and electronic formats.
- In Welsh and English.
- As a short summary leaflet of the key points.
- In accessible formats through our website.

Write to us



North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters
Ffordd Salesbury
St Asaph Business Park St Asaph
Denbighshire
LL17 0JJ

Call us



01745 535 250

Send us an email



Corporateplanning.helpdesk@northwalesfire.gov.wales

Visit our website



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Please ring 999 only in an emergency