

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority  
29 April 2021

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**REPORT AUTHOR:** DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

**SUBJECT:** Fire Prevention Statistics - National Benchmarking Analysis

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Background Papers: None

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Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL		FINANCIAL	
HUMAN RESOURCES		EQUALITY IMPACT	
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	
CORPORATE RISK	Known	OTHER (please specify)	
	New		

*Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.*

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## **PURPOSE:**

To present a comparative analysis of national prevention statistics, as published by the Home Office, against local Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) performance for the period up to the end of March 2020.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Members **note** the content of the paper and **comment** on the implications for the future strategy of the Service.

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### 1. Background

- 1.1. The current Community Risk Management Plan (2019-2023) seeks to ensure the Service is more data driven and evidence based in our decision making, a key enabler for our mission to provide outstanding fire and rescue services that help make Bedfordshire safer. Preventing fires & other emergencies from happening is one of the 6 key aims of the CRMP.
- 1.2. We believe giving staff better access to data and information will help broaden their awareness and insight of the risks within our diverse communities and how we are performing and thereby support our strategic aim of empowering our staff to take greater ownership for delivering performance improvements at the local level.
- 1.3. Benchmarking performance across teams within our Service and with other fire and rescue services (FRS) is an important aspect of this approach within the CRMP. This report utilises the range of fire and rescue service related prevention related statistics published by the Home Office to inform a comparative analysis against our own performance to both justify the current strategy and inform the strategic direction going forward. Please note, the national statistics used in this report cover the period up to March 2020. We will update the report once the 2020/21 financial year national data is published later in 2021.

### 2. Home Fire Safety Checks versus Safe & Well Visits

- 2.1. Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs) are often targeted towards the more vulnerable members of the community, including older people and those with disabilities, and aim to offer bespoke fire safety advice based on their household and lifestyle which can mitigate the risk of fire. These visits can result in the installation of smoke alarms and safety recommendations

such as moving/removing furniture which may be hazardous. Like many FRSs, BFRS now conduct HFSCs as part of a wider Safe and Well Visit (SWV), which can cover additional factors such as falls risk assessment, smoking cessation, cold homes and fuel poverty and a range of other health and community issues. For this report, we will use the HFSC as a measure to allow comparison across all FRS in England noting the numbers include the more comprehensive SWV.

3. Accidental Dwelling Fires & Safe and Well Visits – Why increasing output and improving targeting is a CRMP strategic priority

3.1. Of the 557,299 incidents attended by FRSs in England in 2019/20, around 28% (154,000) were fires.

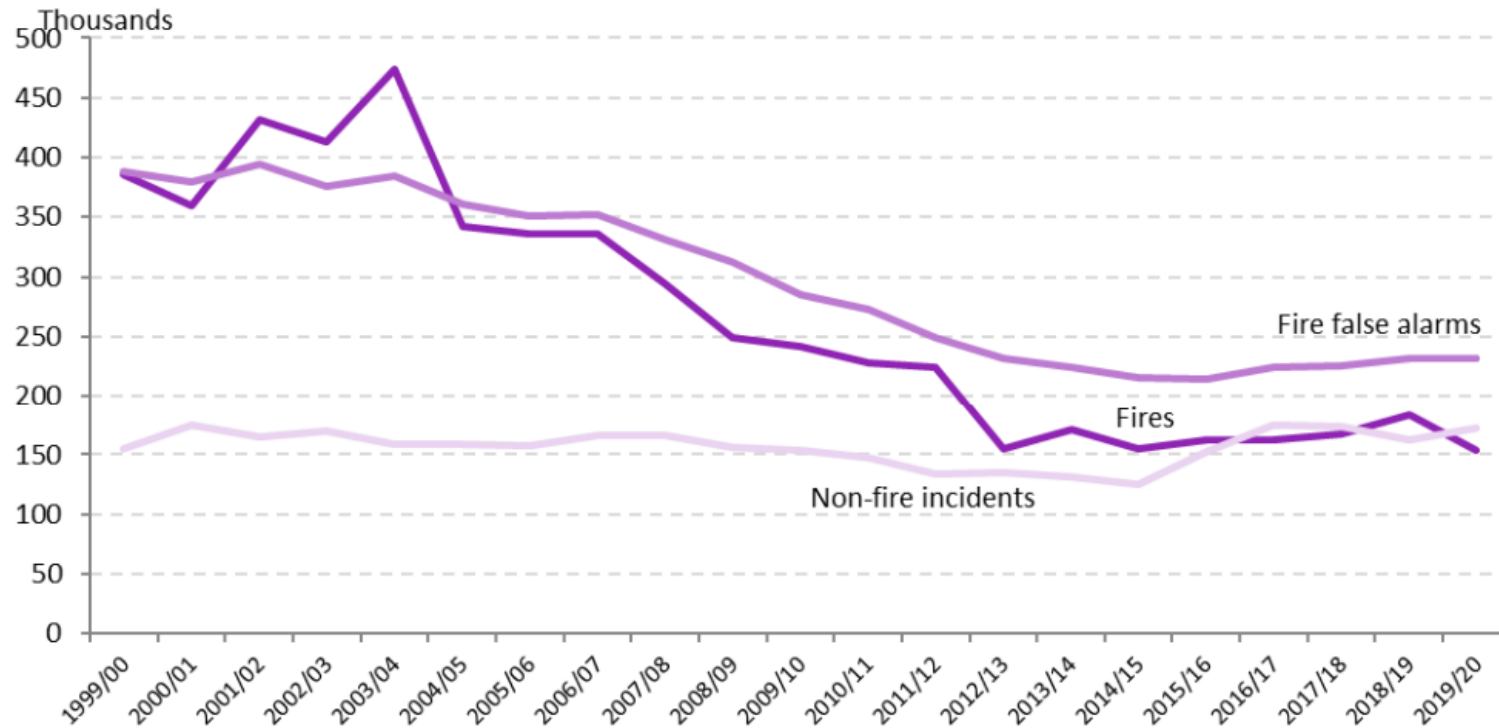


Figure 1: Total incidents attended by type of incident, England; 1999/00 to 2019/20

3.2. By contrast, the 5,921 incidents attended by BFRS in 2019/20, 31% (1,871) were fires.

3.3. Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs) accounted for around 16.5% (25,484) of total fires.

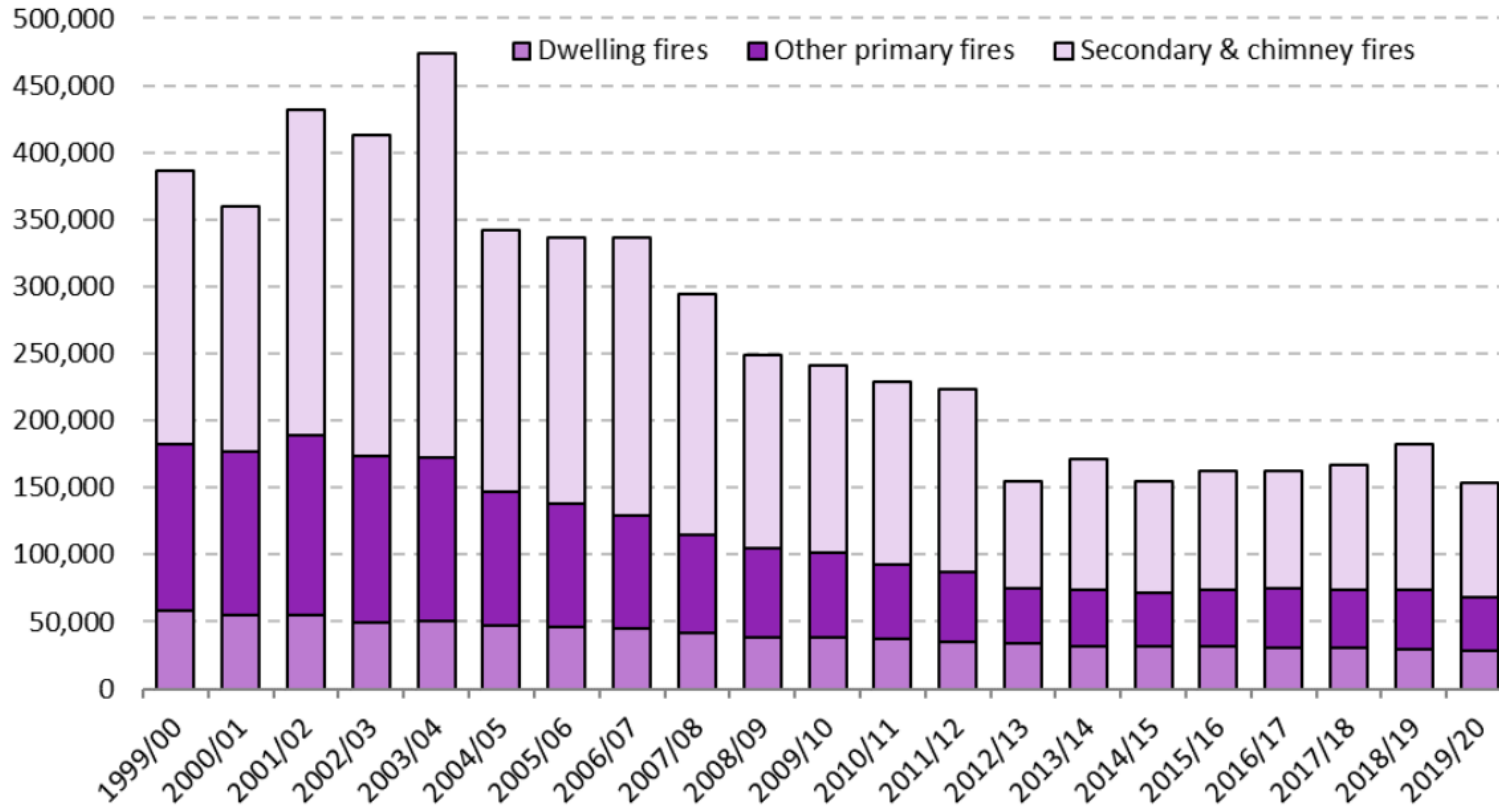


Figure 2: Total fires attended by type of fire, England, 1999/00 to 2019/20

3.4. In Bedfordshire, 17.1% (321) were ADFs.

- 3.5. It is estimated that only 9% of households do not have at least one working smoke alarm but despite this, there was no working smoke alarm present in 24% of all dwelling fires and 26% of all dwelling fire-related fatalities.
- 3.6. The likelihood of dying in a fire is not uniform across all age groups or genders. Generally, the likelihood increases with age, with those aged 80 and over by far the most likely to die in a fire. Overall, men are nearly twice (1.7 times) as likely to die in a fire as women. 46% of all fire-related fatalities in England were 65 years old and over in 2019/20. Smokers' materials were the source of ignition in only 7% of ADFs but were the largest ignition category for fire-related fatalities in ADFs, accounting for 23% in 2019/20.

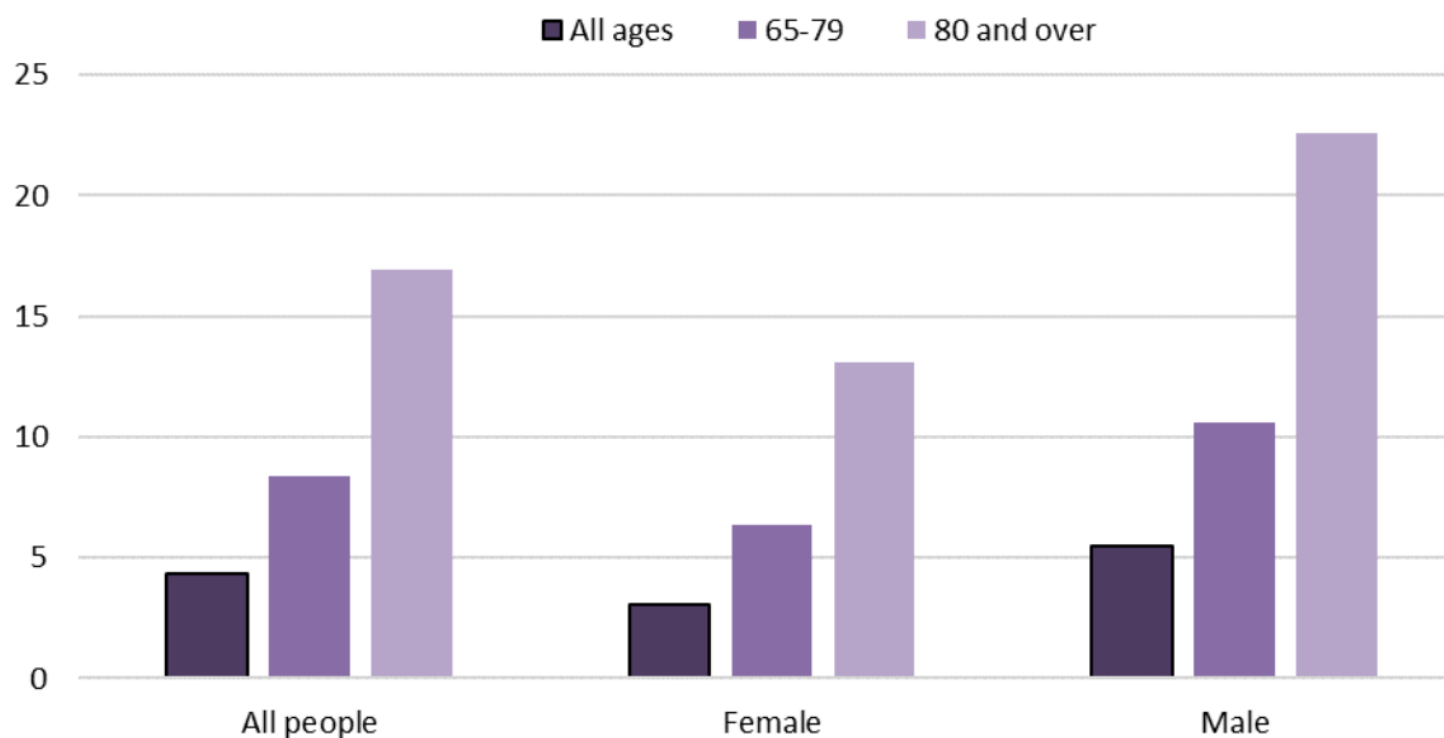


Figure 3: Fatality rate (per million people) - all ages & selected age bands by gender, England; 2019/20

- 3.7. There were no fire-related fatalities in Bedfordshire in 2019/20 although the average over the past 10 years around 2% a year.
- 3.8. There were 1,909 non-fatal casualties requiring hospital treatment (excluding precautionary checks and first aid) from accidental dwelling fires in 2019/20, a similar level to the previous year. In Bedfordshire, there were 28 non-fatal injuries arising from ADFs in 2019/20, a reduction of 20% on the previous year, slightly higher than the 5-year average and which places the BFRS 8th nationally when normalised as ADF non-fatal injury rate per 100,000 population for 2019/20.

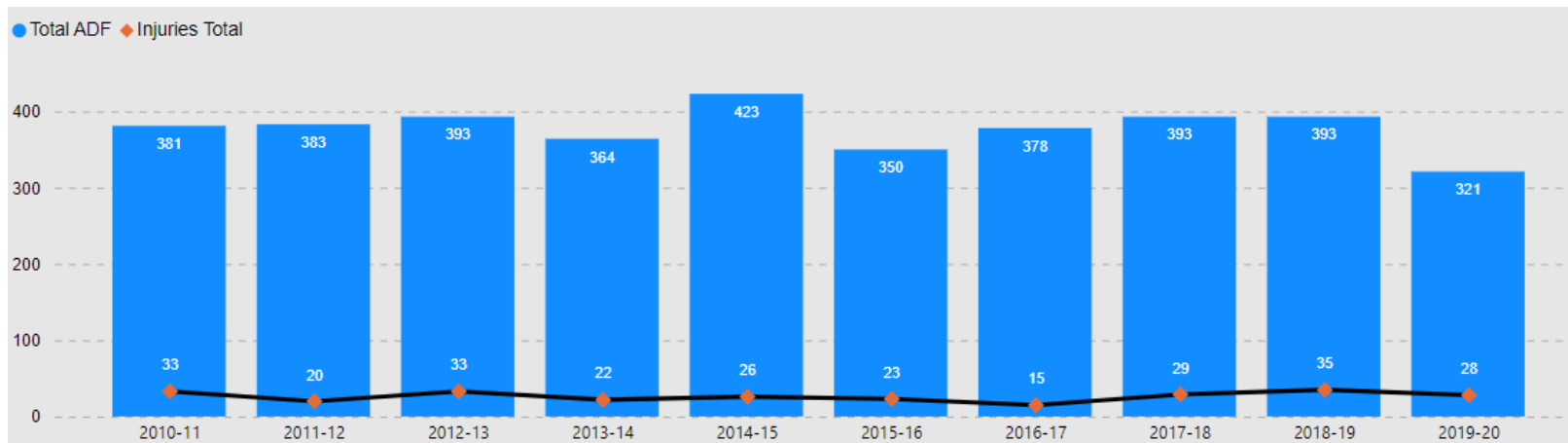


Figure 5: Non-fatal injuries arising from Accidental Dwelling fires 2010/11 to 2019/20

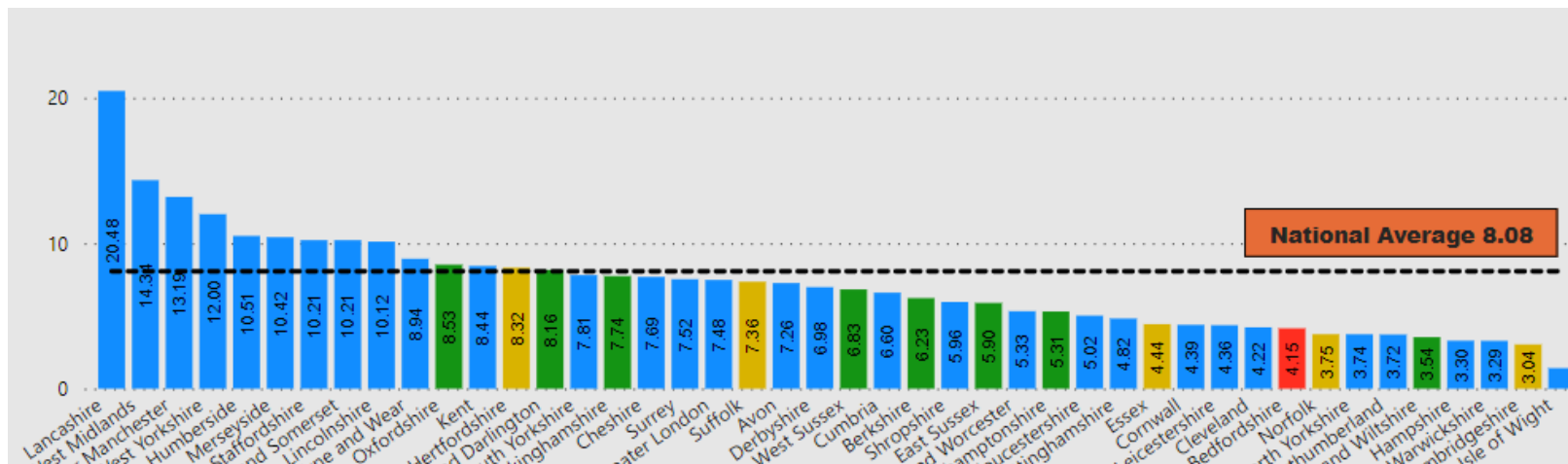


Figure 4- ADF Injury Rate (excl precautionary checks & first aid) per 100,000 population 2019/20

- 3.9. A key strategic priority within the current CRMP 2019/23 is to dramatically increase the number of SWVs being delivered and to target them towards the most vulnerable. This was heavily influenced by a benchmarking analysis of how BFRS compared to other FRS (using 2017/18 data) that contrasted a low output rate of HFSCs/SWVs per 1,000 dwellings (5th worst performing in England) against a high rate of ADFs per 10,000 population (5th highest in England).
- 3.10. The number of Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs) has been declining since 2010/11 with 581,917 HFSC/SWVs delivered nationally, 3% fewer than the previous year.

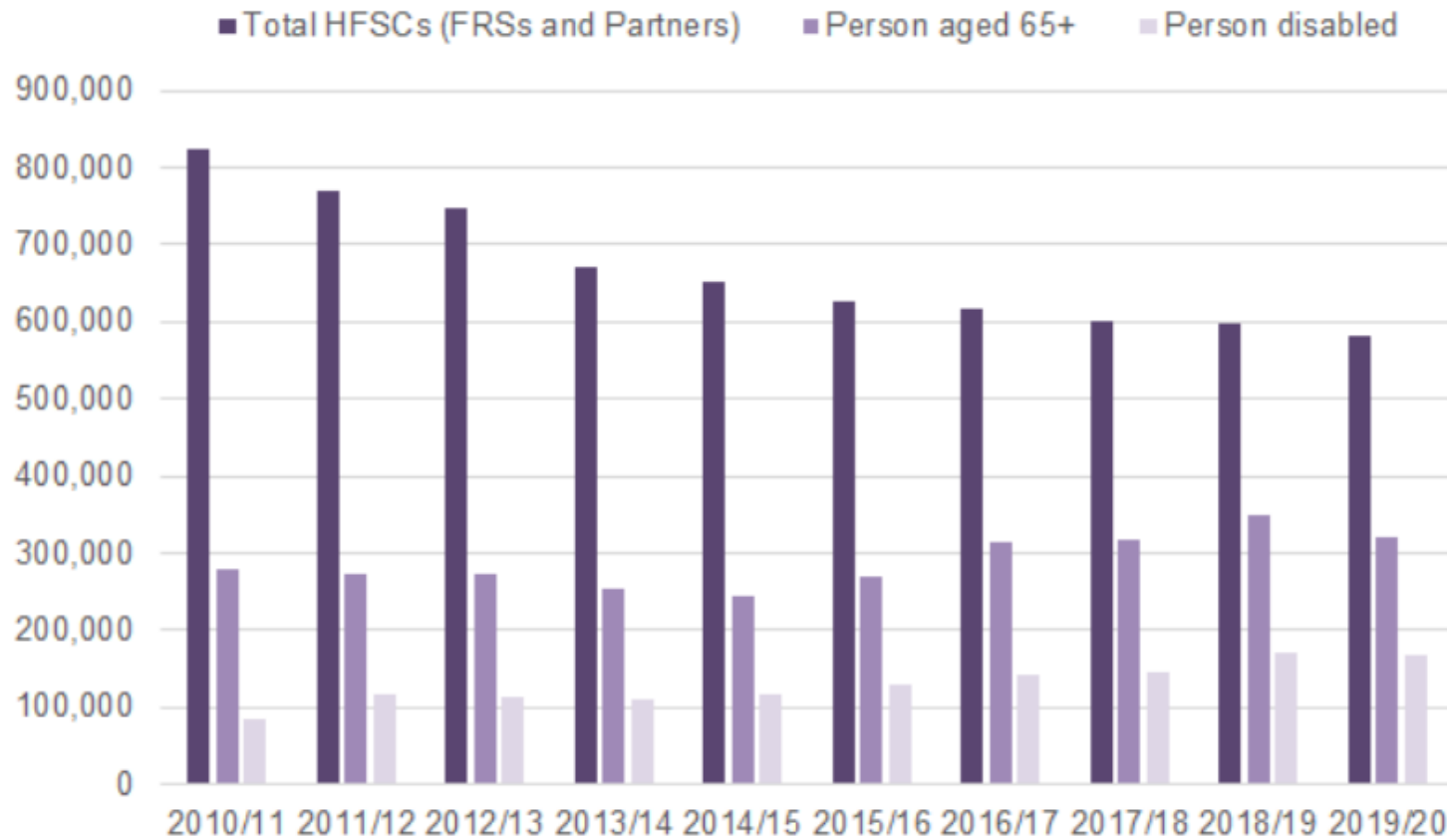


Figure 6: Total numbers of HFSCs and targeted HFSCs completed by FRSs, England, 2010/11 to 2019/20

3.11. In comparison, BFRS delivered 5,806 HFSCs/SWVs, an increase of 3.84% on the previous year and an increase of 176% on 2017/18. 54.9% of those delivered were to people over 65 years old, up from 50.2% in the previous year.

3.12. The chart below shows the correlation between the increase in prevention activity and the reduction in dwelling fires (includes 2020/21 data).

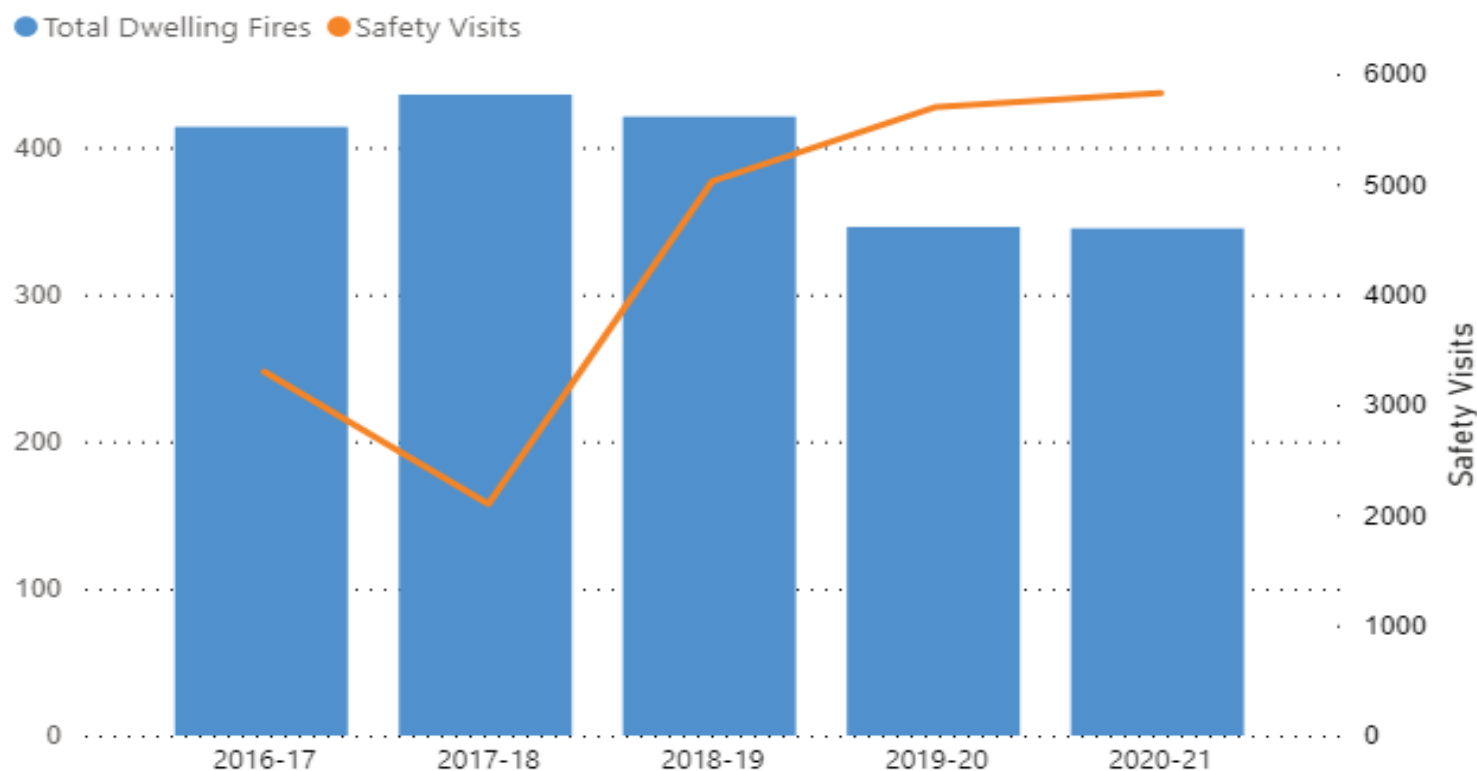


Figure 7: BFRS Safe & Well Visits versus Dwelling Fires

3.13. 2019/20 saw the lowest number of accidental dwelling fires (321 with an additional 24 classified as deliberate) on record and provisional figures for the year ending March 2021 indicate in 2019/20 this reduced yet further to 302.



3.14. The effect of this strategy means for 2019/20, BFRS has moved significantly up the national league table from 39th to 24th of 43 FRS (excl Isle of Wight/Isles of Scilly FRS).

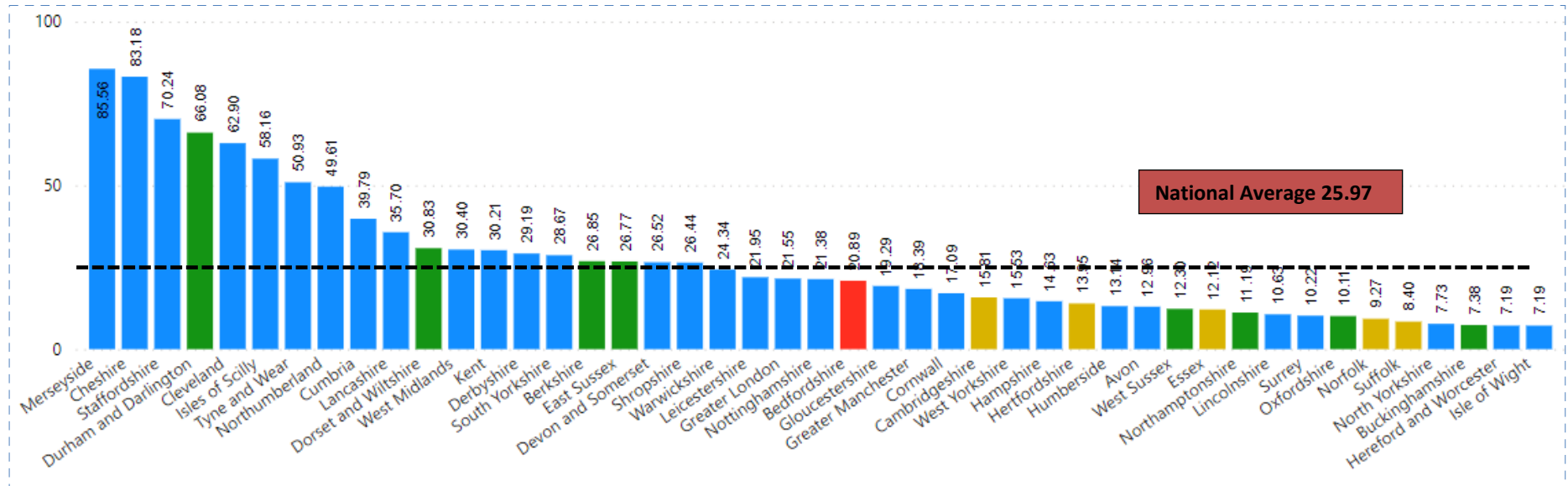


Figure 8: HFSC/SWV rate per 1,000 dwellings (green= family group, yellow=eastern region FRS)

3.15. Whilst a positive uplift, we remain below the national average (20.89 versus 25.97 per 1,000 dwellings) so there is still more work to do and why we are focusing on a target of 10,000 SWVs for 2021/22.

3.16. The rate of ADFs per 10,000 population has also improved reducing to 4.76, which is below the national average of 5.19, improving our national standing from 5th to 9th highest in England.

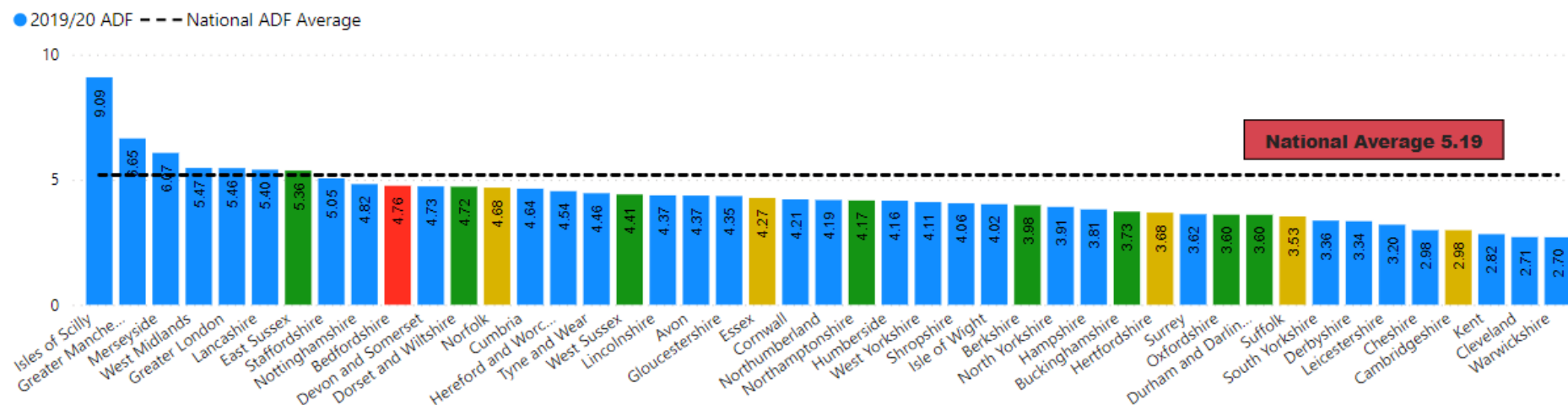


Figure 9: Accidental Dwelling Fire (ADF) rate per 10,000 population by Fire & Rescue Authority 2019/20

#### 4. Conclusion

- 4.1. The comparative analysis indicates whilst there is still more work to do, particularly in reducing the rate of accidental dwelling fires within our area as we remain in the upper quartile of FRS, good progress is being made on the strategic priority within the CRMP 2019/23 to deliver an increase in prevention activity outputs whilst continuing to target the most vulnerable, notwithstanding that 2019/20 was the first year of what is a 4-year CRMP. Analysis shows this work is delivering positive improvements in performance that are reducing the risk from fire and thereby supporting our mission to **provide outstanding fire and rescue services that help make Bedfordshire safer**.
- 4.2. Members should be reassured that the investment in giving staff access to more data and insight about how we are performing will continue to help to drive improvements at the local and Service level.
- 4.3. Further analysis of Protection and Response statistics will be the subject of future presentations to the FRA.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That Members **note** the content of the paper and **comment** on the implications for the future strategy of the Service.

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**DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**