



Bedfordshire
Fire & Rescue Service

Annual Report 2021 – 2022



Welcome to our Annual Report for the year 2021/22

As we started the final year of our 4-year Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) the country was still during the COVID pandemic but as we look back, we are immensely proud of how our firefighters, control operators and staff really stepped up, working tirelessly with our partners in new and innovative ways to make a difference and help keep the people of Bedfordshire safe.

In the midst of the pandemic response, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) concluded their third inspection of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS), assessing 11 aspects of the Service under the three headline areas of Effectiveness, Efficiency and People.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we have made considerable progress since our 2018 inspection, having maintained or improved in each of the 11 graded judgements. Overall, HMICFRS now judge the effectiveness of how we keep people safe and secure from fire and other risks to be **Good** and we are judged to be **Good** at looking after our people. The area of Efficiency was judged as **'Requires Improvement'**, but we have robust plans in place to address this and are confident that we will rectify the points raised in advance of our next inspection. Efficiency is broken down into two sub-questions that are graded. We were graded as 'Good' for 'Making the fire and Rescue Service affordable now and in the future'. The full report can be found [here](#).

In his summary of the inspection Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM, HM Inspector of police and fire and rescue services, said that: *'the service has improved its efficiency and how it treats its staff. However, it needs to be more effective in keeping the public safe and secure. Specifically, the service requires improvement in preventing fires and other risks and protecting the public through fire regulation. The service has sound financial management and scrutiny. It also has robust monitoring and targets for response. And it has a good process in place to make sure that staff are trained and competent.'*

The last year presented some challenges with COVID affecting our normal ways of working. We have overcome these by enabling our staff to work from home where they can and providing them with the equipment to do this effectively. We have made our offices and our operational areas COVID safe and have provided additional PPE and other equipment to ensure that our staff have safe working environments. In addition, to aid the multi-agency response to COVID we have provided a valuable command and support role for the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), COVID Strategic Command Group (SCG) and the Tactical Command Group (TCG) meetings. We continue to strive to be an 'employer of choice' with a highly skilled and motivated workforce that understands and reflects the diversity of our communities, and who see our Service as an engaging, positive, and rewarding place to work.

By being open and responsive to change, and through exploring and investing in new and innovative technologies and ways of working, we will continue to improve the safety and wellbeing of the diverse communities we serve. Each year we publish a Community Risk Action Plan summarising what we intend to deliver over the year.

This Annual Report highlights our progress and achievements over the past year including our award-winning collaboration with the East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST) and the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). We continue to provide updates on everything we do as a Service on our social media channels and we welcome any feedback you have.

Our Values

- **We've got your back**
- **Every contact counts**
- **We dare to be different**
- **We are accountable**

You can stay connected on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, as well as visiting our website www.bedsfire.gov.uk please follow us on our social media platforms @bedsfire

Month by Month highlights

April 2021

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) set up the first walk in vaccination pilot in the UK, in just 24 hours. The service supported the local community of Bedfordshire and enable the vaccination of a substantial number of people that were eligible for the vaccine.

BFRS and East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) extended their partnership, which was the first within the region. This collaboration of services not only allows us to support EEAST, but to gain direct referrals for safe and well visits to improve patient safety.

BFRS received an award from Susan Lousada DL, former High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, for 'Outstanding Service to the Community' Award.

In May 2021

In support of Arson Awareness Month, BFRS provided guidance and safety messages on how to reduce deliberate fires. As well as supporting 'Arson Awareness Month,' crews from Stopsley, our community safety team and the Alzheimer's Society put together a [video](#) for 'Dementia Action Week.' Then, in 'Carers Week,' we joined forces with the Disability Resource Centre on a stall in Luton informing communities of the support that was available from the Service.

In June 2021

We started with 'Volunteer Week' and thanked our Fire Cadet Instructors across the Service and vaccine volunteers on our social media channels, featuring quotes from the volunteers.

We sadly lost Chief Fire Officer, Paul M Fuller, following a short illness, a mere 3 weeks before he was due to retire. Paul joined the Fire Service in 1978 and became Chief Fire Officer in Bedfordshire in 2002, having worked in West Midlands, West Sussex, Staffordshire, and Wiltshire, as well as a secondment to Warwickshire. He also supported several national bodies and will be remembered for his charity work with the Children's Burns Trust and the Fire Fighters Charity.

Our new Chief Fire Officer, Andrew Hopkinson, was appointed on promotion from his role as Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

In July 2021

We launched our wholetime firefighter recruitment campaign receiving 332 applications. 14 Successful candidates started their training in February 2022, all passing and starting at their station in June 2022. A further cohort of 12 successful candidates are due to start their training course in September 2022 which will enable them to join their stations in December 2022.

In August 2021

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service joined forces with Bedfordshire Police's Rural Crime Team to produce and distribute a fire safety guide for the agricultural community. The guidance document

produced by Kempston Green Watch, gives advice on how to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of either an accidental or deliberate fire.

In September 2021

We worked alongside Forest of Marston Vale to ensure that the bodies of water at their Millennium Country Park are safe for visitors. Following a risk assessment of their lands, the Forest of Marston Vale team contacted BFRS to install several water rescue boards at key points around their Millennium Country Park site in Marston Moretaine. There are now six boards installed around the entirety of the park, which all include a locked throwline cabinet that can only be opened by using a code obtained by calling 999.

We celebrated 'Emergency Services Day' and attended the three flag raising ceremonies in Bedford, Central Beds and Luton to remember those who had given their lives to the local services.

We supported 'Gas Safety Week' to raise public awareness of gas safety and the risks involved. Several safety messages were shared across our media channels encouraging people to ensure their homes are safe including information on carbon monoxide protection.

We also engaged in 'Project EDWARD' Week to improve road safety by ensuring that vehicles are Fit for the Road. Fire Bikes hosted a Biker Down! Course trialling the Virtual Reality technology which provide road safety footage.

During 'Fire Door Safety Week' we worked with the University of Bedfordshire and attended their fresher's event to spread the word around fire door safety and the fire risks that new students should be aware of.

We hosted an open evening at Dunstable Fire Station for local councillors, MPs, and Fire Authority Members. We showcased some of our specialist rescue equipment and demonstrated how we adapted to the challenges faced during the pandemic.

In October 2021

A team from BFRS attended the Fire Service College and took part in the national Breathing Apparatus competition. The team won the award for the 'Best Breathing Apparatus Team' which was an outstanding achievement for the team considering the high level and skill of the competition. The competition was open to all UK Fire and Rescue services, giving them the opportunity to showcase best practice and firefighter safety.

To support 'National Burns Awareness Day,' our community safety team visited Morrisons Supermarket in Bedford to talk to members of the public about the risks and preventative measures involved in safeguarding people, particularly children, against burns.

In November 2021

We supported Brake Road Safety Week, encouraging everyone who uses UK roads to consider their responsibilities and actions. To raise awareness a [video](#) was created highlighting the importance of road safety and community support.

After restrictions imposed by the pandemic, we finally hosted our first recognition event – Long Service and Good Conduct Awards. The evening was put together to recognise those that had achieved their 20 and 25 years of service.

We were invited to the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) awards ceremony. We were recognised twice in the 'COVID-19 going the extra mile award' for our work with the East of England Ambulance Service and the role that we played providing command support to the local resilience forum.

In the Champion of Equality, we were recognised for our work on our LGBTQ+ network and our diversity work. Our former Assistant Chief Fire Officer was recognised for his contribution to AFSA as a champion of equality and diversity in the workplace and for his work in support of the Firefighters Charity.

The Shining Light Award was presented in memory to our late Chief Fire Officer Paul Fuller for his advocacy, support, and friendship to AFSA.

In December 2021

The Excellence in Fire & Emergency Awards took place where we won the Emergency Services Collaboration of the Year for our work supporting EEAST during the pandemic. Former Chief Fire Officer, Paul Fuller was also recognised for his outstanding contribution to the Fire and Rescue Service.

As 2021 ended, we launched a consultation on its proposals for Service delivery and its Budget and Council Tax requirements for 2022/23.

In January 2022

We engaged with the local community to seek views on the Service's priorities and proposals and to seek an increase in contributions for funding from council tax. A record number of responses to our CRMP consultation 746 responses were received.

We worked with BBC Three Counties Radio to produce a [video](#) on 'how to drive to help emergency services. This also included a live interview about how the way people drive can make things more difficult for the fire service when responding to incidents on blue lights.

To mark Register My Appliance Week (17 – 21 January) the Service undertook a campaign which urged the public to register their appliances so that they can be notified if a free safety repair was ever needed.

In February 2022

We celebrated LGBTQ+ month and produced a [video](#) with Firefighters to support our recruitment department. The video gave a powerful insight into a firefighter's personal life and his journey in becoming a firefighter. We also supported National Apprenticeship Week with our Property Services Apprentice, sharing his career dreams and experience at BFRS.

We worked with Staywise and Dunstable White Watch to film a video of the 'Birthday Cake Mistake' to be used in School Year 2 visits and as part of the Staywise material collection.

On February 18th Storm Eunice battered the UK with gusts of 70mph recorded within Bedfordshire. As our crews were mobilised to storm related incidents across the county, we acted quickly to establish an Incident Room within Service Control. Throughout the afternoon our control operators responded to a total of 109 calls in 5 hours from across 7 different counties.

We issued warnings on social media encouraging people to take extra care when driving, look out for fallen objects and increase stopping distances. We worked with BBC 3 Counties Radio 3 to offer official advice and warnings to the community.

Our Protection team held a Small Business Action Day at Church Arcade to offer advice to local communities on how to keep their businesses safe.

In March 2022

Bedford Blue Watch developed a mobile phone and driving safety [video](#) targeted at young drivers highlighting the impact of using mobile phones when driving can have.

We successfully prosecuted the owners of a multi storey office block in Bedford for breaching a number of fire safety regulations.

On the 29 March we hosted a delegation from the Home Office who came to learn more about our innovative work supporting EEAST. They joined us for our Staff Engagement Forum at Dunstable Fire Station followed by a tour of the station. The Chairman and Chief Fire Officer (CFO) then hosted a show & tell session on our EEAST work including meeting firefighters from our co-responder fire stations, our bariatric and complex patient rescue team based at Dunstable and our Falls Response Team crewed by our community fire safety team.

For International Women's Day we ran a campaign celebrating the work of the women at BFRS. Our female firefighters, officers and support staff are proud to represent BFRS and work hard to make a difference in our community and to keep people safe.

Finally, we hosted our first 'Have A Go Day' of 2022 for people that had an interest in a career as a firefighter. Throughout the day they faced several physical and mental challenges to gain a better insight of a firefighting role.

Response Statistics – April 2021 – March 2022

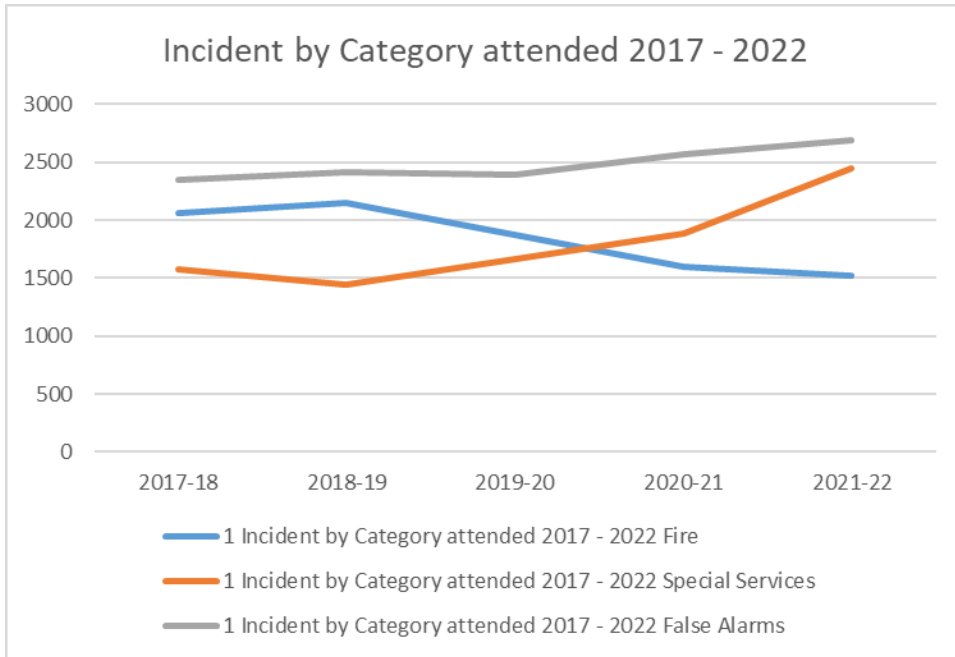
Road Traffic Collisions	398 +16%
Outdoor bonfires	690 -21%
Building fires	481 – 5%
1148 mobilisations to assist EEAST – consisting of:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 456 Co-responders • 265 Falls team/ lift patients • 427 Other calls to assist ambulance including Tactical Support Unit calls
Provided logistical support for Covid vaccination and testing centres	Around 900 hours of support
Provided Command Support for Local Resilience Forum	Over 100 multi agency meetings on Covid
Award achievements for support to EEAST	<p>The Excellence in Fire & Emergency Awards - won the Emergency Services Collaboration of the Year for our work supporting EEAST</p> <p>Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) awards recognised our work with EEAST</p>

PERFORMANCE

TOTAL NUMBER OF INCIDENTS ATTENDED

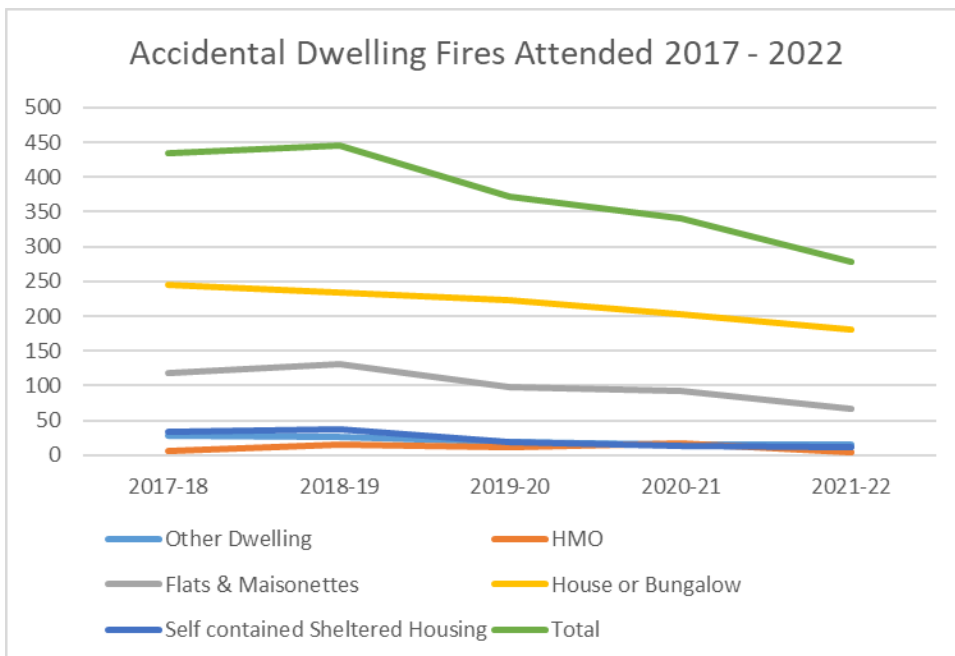
The number of incidents attended by the Service has fluctuated over the five years and had been showing a slight increase. At the time of last reporting, we felt the number of incidents was anticipated to increase as more collaborative activity expands our capabilities (e.g., forced entry for medical emergencies, EMR, Co-responding, Falls, and assisting the Police with missing persons).

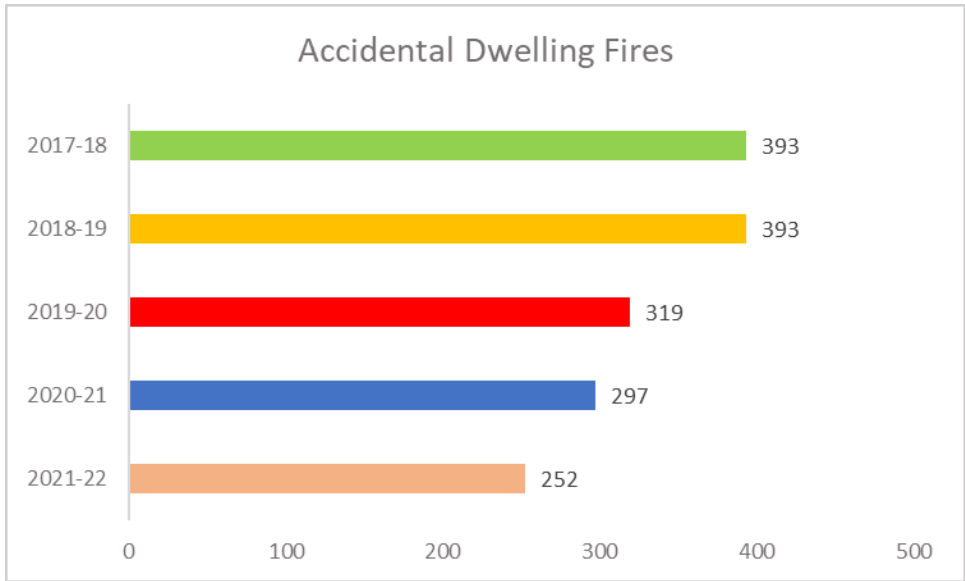
We see a continued increase in incidents attended as predicted with 647 more mobilisations in total this year than last. However, the proportion of AFA's attended represents nearly a third of the increase which was not predicted.



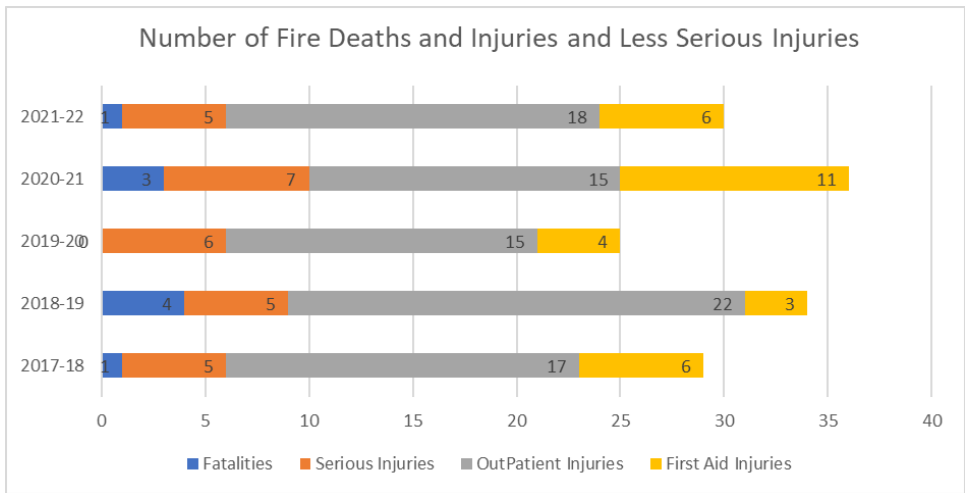
ACCIDENTAL DWELLING FIRES

When comparing 2020/21 and 2021/22 there has been a reduction from 297 to 252 primary accidental dwelling fires (down by 15%). The average for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2022 inclusive is 330.8 accidental dwelling fires per annum. The 2021/22 total of 252 is 24% below the five-year average and is the lowest ever total since records began to be collected in the current Incident Recording System (IRS) in 2009.



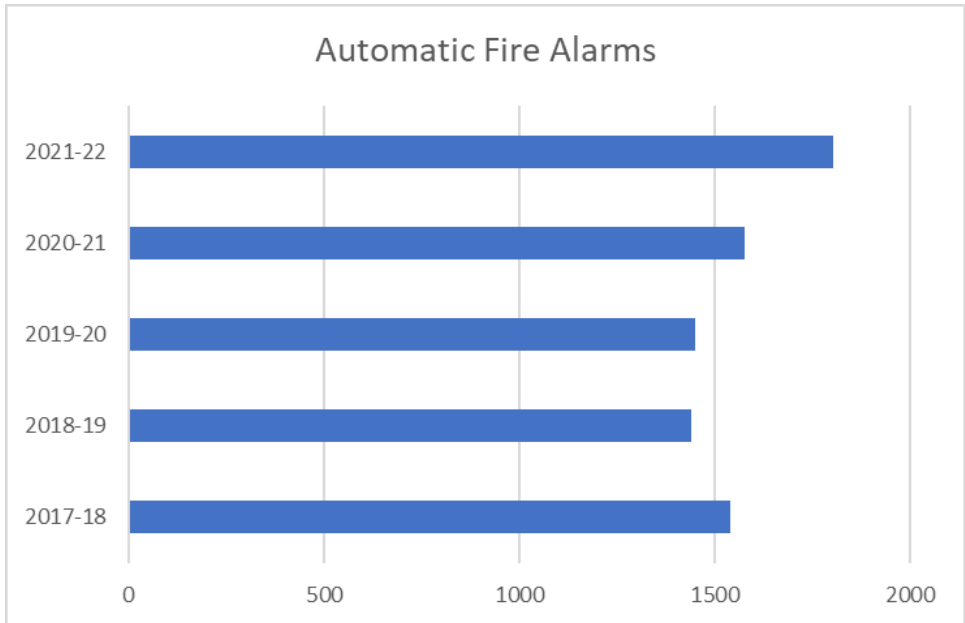


NUMBER OF FIRE DEATHS, INJURIES AND LESS SERIOUS INJURIES



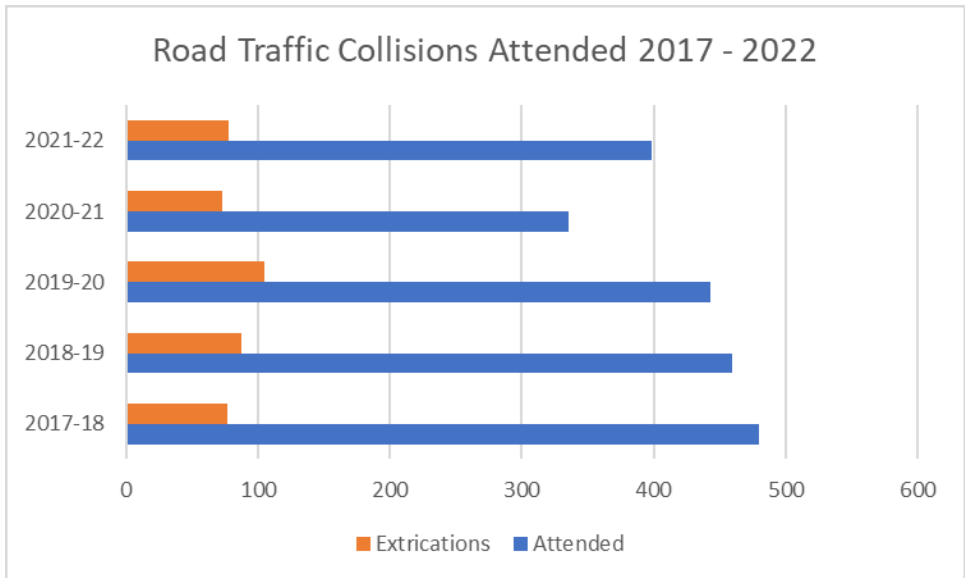
NUMBER ALARMS FROM AFA'S

BFRS continues to target the reduction in False Alarms from Automatic Fire Alarm Systems and has been applying measures to support this. During 2021-22 we attended 1804 AFA's which is an increase of 227 AFA's. This is being actively managed in the Fire Control team to understand why these types of attendance are increasing outside of strategic intentions.



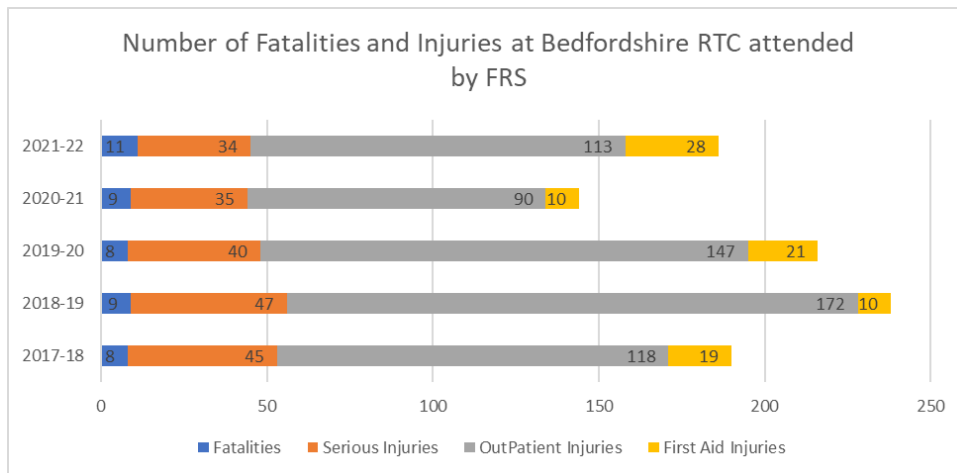
ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS ATTENDED

The number of Road Traffic Collisions has declined over the last 4 years. However, since the number recorded in 2020/21 (lowest in the last 5 years), we have seen an increase for 2021/22. This is likely the effect of people returning to work and commuting after the global pandemic.



ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISION INJURIES AND FATALITIES

The number of Road Traffic Collision injuries and fatalities has seen serious injuries decline over the last 3 years. However, Fatalities have remained stable with little fluctuation. Other factors have decreased and 2020/21 does appear to be an outlier probably down to the pandemic. 2021/22 has seen numbers become more consistent with what we usually see, this is almost certainly linked to people returning to work.



PREVENTION

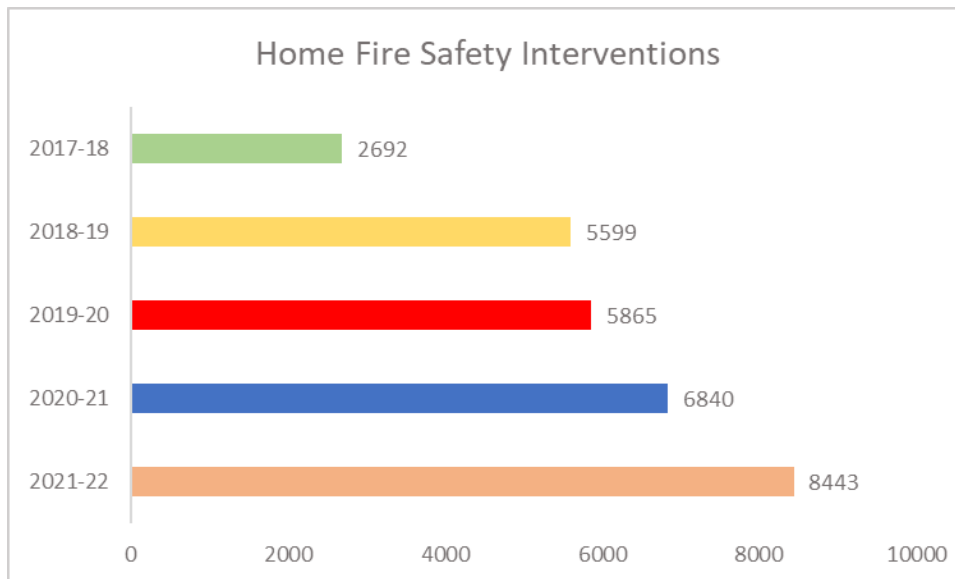
HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECKS/SAFE AND WELL VISITS

BFRS makes effective use of its own data, and that of health and other partners, to implement an intelligence led approach, targeting delivery at the most vulnerable households. The Service is continuously establishing new partnerships to generate referrals from other agencies, who can assist in identifying vulnerable households that would benefit from a Safe and Well Visit.

BFRS uses a variety of risk reduction interventions in its continued commitment to keep the communities of Bedfordshire safe.

In 2021/22 prevention activity was affected by the restrictions imposed in response to the COVID pandemic. However, BFRS continued to deliver home fire safety interventions within the community. Visits involving entering dwellings were maintained for those assessed as at high risk from fire, using measures such as social distancing and face masks to reduce the risk of infection. Social distancing approaches were also used with 2397 interventions delivered by a 'Doorstep visit' and 616 delivered by telephone.

Our online referral portal (launched in August 2020) has continued to deliver referrals with 609 (7.2% of total) visits generated by the portal. The portal generated a high proportion of visits to households with known risk factors such as elderly occupants, people living alone and households with no working smoke alarm.



In total 8,443 Home Fire Safety interventions were delivered, representing a 23% increase compared to 2021/22 and the highest numbers recorded in the 5-year period. These visits take the form of enhanced Home Fire Safety Checks that cover a range of additional areas addressing personal safety and wellbeing. These areas include advice and referrals to partner agencies aimed to reduce risks from:

- Crime;
- Slips, Trips and Falls;
- Smoking and,
- Alcohol consumption

BFRS uses a variety of risk reduction interventions in its continued commitment to keep the communities of Bedfordshire safe.

SAFEGUARDING

BFRS personnel undertake a wide range of public facing roles, educating, and engaging with our communities including children, young people, and adults with complex needs and vulnerabilities. BFRS has a legal and moral obligation to recognise, and report concerns about abuse or neglect and ensure personnel have the necessary skills and training to be safe and effective practitioners. In 2021/22 we have:

- Established a paperless online Safeguarding reporting process
- Introduced a Safeguarding advisor role into the Prevention Structure
- Continued to see an increase in the number and quality of referrals made by BFRS. There were 270 Safeguarding referrals made including 208 as a result of Home Fire Safety Visits
- Fitted a total of 259 arson proof letterboxes to homes identified as at risk from fire attack including victims of domestic abuse
- Continued to engage with young fire setters

ARSON REDUCTION

BFRS has an Arson Reduction Officer who leads on delivering the Arson Reduction Strategy. We work in partnership with other agencies to reduce arson by implementing interventions in three key areas:

- Environmental Interventions: aimed at removing the opportunities for arsonists to commit offences, removing potential targets for arson offences, and improving security in respect of targets for arson offences that cannot be removed
- Investigation-based Interventions: aimed at assisting the police and other partner agencies in the identification of patterns, series, and trends in respect of arson offences
- Educational Interventions: aimed at educating offenders and potential offenders to remove or prevent development of the motivation for engaging in fire setting behaviour

Despite the ongoing restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic it was 'business as usual' in respect of the environmental and investigation-based interventions. Overall, there was an increase from 430 to 565 deliberate fires (up by 21%) compared to 2020/21, but still 30% less than the five-year average.

ROAD SAFETY

Our Community Safety Officer Road Safety is supported by eight part time Road Traffic Collision (RTC) Reduction Officers. Although COVID-19 restrictions continued to present some challenges, our team has been working hard to ensure that collaborative working, and educational events have continued. These include:

The delivery of 9 Biker down courses was achieved this year with the implementation of an additional module led by Bedfordshire Police. The Virtual Reality resources have also started to be used in the course content and will be developed further moving forward.

The RTCRO's also supported additional events to include TEC Courses (Tail End Charlie) where they provide incident scene management input for group rider leaders. TEC Leaders oversee large, arranged group rides.

We supported 'Survive the Drive' at Chicksands which was a multiagency event including Police, Ambulance and Fire. It comprises a mix of films featuring armed services personnel who have been involved in a road traffic collision, as well as live speakers who share their own first-hand experiences.

We have also taken the opportunity to progress joint working initiatives:

- Working alongside our local advanced motorcycle group, Herts & Beds Advanced Motorcyclists (HBAM), we have devised a training package for Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) National Observers to ensure they have the skills to manage group riding sessions and manage the initial 'first on scene' at an RTC
- We have been working in conjunction with Bedfordshire Police to deliver Police Bike Safe
- The team supported educational campaigns including at vaccination centres and a joint campaign on the A507. This was designed solely for social media due to the pandemic and was highly successful in terms of views and shares. The campaign generated significant interest from the local parish councils (Amphill / Clophill / Shefford / Maulden) who have

been campaigning to make the road safer and it resulted in Central Bedfordshire Council committing to short term improvements and exploring longer term solutions.

Following a successful CCC funding bid we are developing our own road safety vehicle with in built virtual reality (VR) experience. By introducing of a new way of delivering safety messages through a VR experience, we aim have and enhanced ability and appeal to expand our engagement significantly, targeting and then delivering to new/younger road users who we traditionally struggle to reach.

WATER SAFETY

Social media campaigns have been favoured for the educational route during the last year due to pandemic restrictions. Our media campaigns aligning with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) National campaign calendar.

Our safety officers have been working with colleagues at Forest of Marston Vale to install several water rescue boards around water sites they own. This included 6 boards initially, with further boards to be purchased later.

The last year included a significant amount of planning for a county wide implementation of the NFCC water safety responder programme. Riverside North and the Embankment in Bedford has been targeted previously with refresher training carried out to local businesses by our safety officers and operational crews from Bedford station.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT/FIRE CADETS

Our Youth officers support a variety of youth initiatives many of which were reinstated as pandemic restrictions were progressively lifted.

Our Youth officers delivered a 5-day National Fire Setter training course to 6 members of our community safety team to help build resilience. This has enabled us to support 22 SAFE cases involving young fire setters within Bedfordshire. Some cases included partnership work with Beds Police

The team supported operational crews to create a virtual Year 2 educational package. A pilot received positive feedback from schools. The design phase has been completed and virtual visits have been delivered to key stage 1 and 2 pupils utilising the Staywise educational resources. Face to face visits are also taking place where it is safe to do so within schools across Bedfordshire.

Despite the challenges last year, we recruited 24 new fire cadets during October and November 2021, joining the three cadet units at Luton, Leighton Buzzard, and Sandy. 2022 has seen the introduction of a new cadet unit at Bedford expanding the current total to 32 Fire Cadets supported by 16 Instructors, including 3 volunteers.

The cadet instructors adapted and launched virtual sessions on MS Teams which kept the young people engaged with over 30 virtual sessions run from December 2021 to April 2022.

The Cadets have also been provided with training in a recognised First aid qualification as well as Mental health awareness. Both of which will support themselves and their local communities.

Our Youth team have also provided educational support to external partners to include;

- Visits for young carers from both the Ivel Valley Early Intervention Team and CHUMS Charity.
- Cornerways Care- fire/home safety session undertaken for young people.
- Transition UK Home fire safety session for young people with special needs

PROTECTION

BFRS is the enforcing authority for the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The Fire Safety Order requires anyone in control of a premises (the ‘responsible person’) to carry out a fire risk assessment to determine what steps they need to take to reduce the risk from fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire.

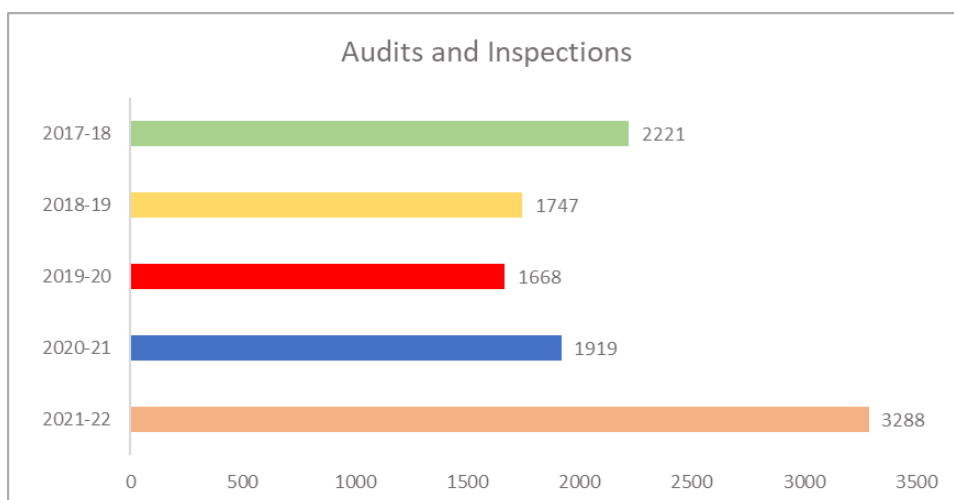
During 2021/22 we continued to refine our Protection approach in response to national learning arising from the Grenfell Tower tragedy. The Government continued to provide significant grant funding to support an uplift in protection capacity and competency.

Over the course of 2021/22 BFRS has:

- Invested a total of £167,300 of government uplift grant, including £102,000 on new Fire Safety Advisers and £18,000 on training and development
- Continued to manage risks in high-rise residential buildings reporting our findings to Government
- Continued our investment in improving our premises database and fire safety management systems

AUDITS AND INSPECTIONS

As the enforcing authority BFRS undertakes a range of planned and reactive inspections of premises (normally buildings or parts of buildings) to which the Fire Safety Order applies. The Fire Safety Order applies very widely and there are over 22,000 premises within the county of Bedfordshire to which, the Fire Safety Order applies. With so many premises, through our risk-based inspection programme we target our finite resources on those buildings that present the highest risk to life safety in the event of a fire. Premises classed as high risk are predominantly those buildings used for sleeping or with vulnerable occupants, such as care homes, hotels, hospitals, and other residential accommodation. High rise residential buildings and large public access buildings such as sports stadiums etc. are also classed as high risk. We also sample other types of premises such as offices, factories, and shops.



Our risk-based inspection programme includes the following types of activity:

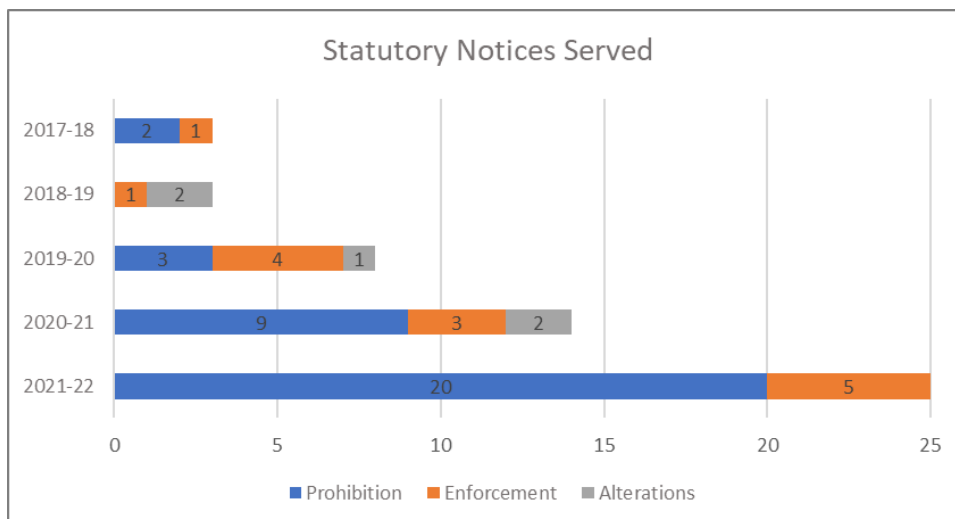
- Planned audits of higher risk premises by specialist fire safety staff
- Basic fire safety checks of lower risk premises by operational staff
- Carrying out 'after fire' inspections
- Inspections to investigate complaints we receive about fire safety standards in premises

In 2021/22 BFRS continued to enforce the Fire Safety Order taking a risk-based approach to protection activity. BFRS conducted a total of 3,288 audits and inspections during 2021/22 an increase of 71% compared to the previous year. This included 647 audits of which 243 were to high-risk premises. High risk premises receive a routine fire safety audit every three years as a minimum.

FORMAL ENFORCEMENT ACTION

When BFRS finds that the requirements of the Fire Safety Order have not been complied with, the action that may be taken ranges from informal advice through to prosecution. BFRS takes a 'firm but fair' approach to enforcement in line with the Regulators Code. Formal enforcement actions include serving the types of notices set out below. It is a criminal offence to fail to comply with these notices.

- **Prohibition Notice** – served where the risk is considered so serious that use of the premises needs to be prohibited or restricted until specified matters have been remedied
- **Enforcement Notice** - served where there is a clear breach of the law, where the degree of risk of harm is significant, and where a remedy needs to be secured within a set period
- **Alterations Notice** – served where there is a serious risk (or there would be with a change to the premises) and may require that before any changes are made details of the proposed changes must be submitted to the fire authority



During 2021/22 BFRS served higher numbers of Notices than in any previous year. Prohibition Notices have been served on twenty premises that were providing sleeping accommodation without adequate fire safety arrangements (such as fire detection and alarm systems, fire doors and escape routes). This includes several houses in multiple occupation (HMO) as a result of our joint working with the housing authorities to combat rogue landlords who are renting accommodation without ensuring that the required fire safety measures are in place.

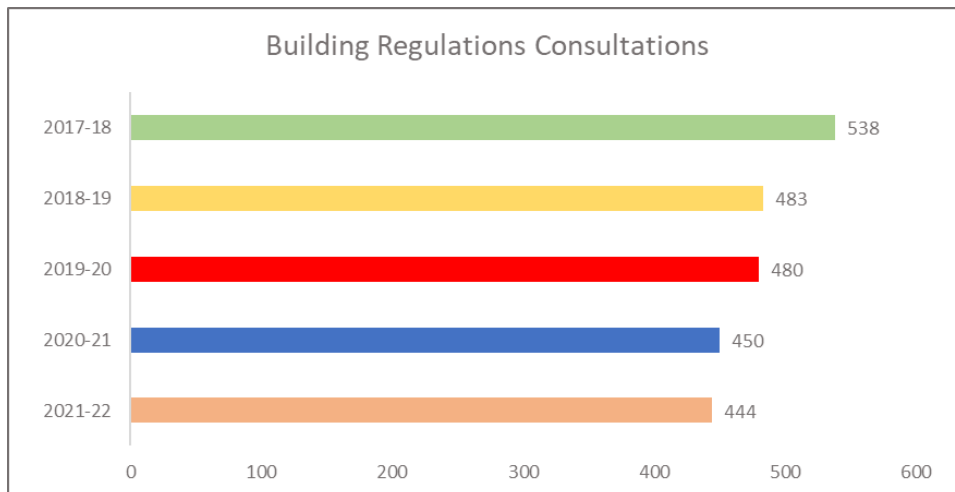
During 2021/22 BFRS successfully prosecuted an office premises in Bedford for fire safety offences, resulting in fines totalling £40,000 being imposed by the courts. Another premises accepted a simple caution for failing to comply with the requirements of an Enforcement notice issued by BFRS.

STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

In England and Wales, the Building Act 1984 and its Building Regulations apply to new buildings and to building work such as the erection, extension, or material alteration of an existing building. Fire safety requirements are set out in Building Regulations and guidance on meeting the requirements is given in Approved Document B (Fire safety). The building control authority or approved inspector are responsible for checking for compliance with these requirements and undertake statutory consultation with the fire and rescue service as part of that process.

In 2021/22 BFRS made responses to 444 Building Regulations consultations, which was slightly fewer than in previous years.

In addition to Building Regulations consultations, BFRS also responds to other consultations including those relating to Licensing, Care standards, and Ofsted inspections. In 2021/22 BFRS responded to 118 such consultations.



FINANCE

A FINANCIAL SUMMARY OF 2021/22

The Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) is a precepting authority – this means that its net cost, after receipt of Government Grant, is met by a proportion of local business rates and council tax via the unitary authorities of in Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, and Luton.

The FRA is acutely aware, particularly in the current economic climate, of the need to keep any increase in council tax to the minimum, always bearing in mind the need to adequately fund the Fire and Rescue Service. Resources must, therefore, be enough to enable this emergency service to be fully operational throughout the year. For the 2021/22 budget, the FRA was able to keep its Council Tax increase to 1.99%. A Band D property in 2021/22 paid £102.41 for the annual council tax charge of the Fire and Rescue Service.

A FINANCIAL COMMENTARY OF 2021/22

The settlement figures for 2022/23 were the third single year settlement. A three-year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) was carried out over 2021, however a single year's funding

information has again provided by to Local Government. It is hoped that figures will be released for 2023/24 and 2024/25 at this time next year. However, we have been proactive in identifying changes that ensure continuity of our professional services whilst delivering the required efficiencies. Future financial settlements are likely to remain difficult. As such, we continue to plan for a range of financial scenarios that may emerge in the next few years. Our ability to mitigate our risks and realise opportunities is directly impacted by our resourcing and budgetary make-up. Our current budgetary plans and assumptions determine the speed at which we will deliver our action plans. More information is available on our website. Our financial priorities are to:

- Ensure we deliver a balanced sustainable budget that provides value for money, aligns our resources to risk and supports the delivery of our CRMP;
- Be innovative in developing and delivering on our Efficiency Plan whilst maintaining a prudent level and utilisation of our reserves. Our Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is a document that sets the Authority's financial strategy for the next four years. It focuses on the 2022/23 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme, but also sets the scene for future years. It covers national events such as the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and then breaks down how this impacts locally on the Authority. The MTFS details our reserves policy, planning assumptions behind the budget figures and other considerations that must be considered when setting the strategy, such as the tax base, efficiencies, and shared services.

Revenue Budget:

For 2021/22 the FRA approved a revenue budget requirement of £31.713m circa 80 per cent of these costs are for employees.

2021/22 Year End Contribution to Reserves:

The unaudited year-end contribution to reserves was 77k. The underspend was predominantly due to pay awards being set nationally that were lower than had been budgeted for. This underspend had been reported during the year to the FRA.

Capital Budget:

Our capital programme highlights spending on assets such as our fire stations and fire engines. Each year the Authority draws up a rolling four-year programme of capital projects. The capital projects for this year total £1.038m and these are being funded by contributions from the revenue budget and reserves utilisation. Projects for this year include:

- Investment in our vehicle feet, to maintain effective, economic, and efficient fire appliances;
- Investment in IT;
- Investment in Equipment
- Replacement Mobilisation system;
- Investment in the modernisation of our buildings.

Reserves:

The General Reserve balance as of 31 March 2022 was £2.4m. This is following work undertaken over the last few years to establish specific earmarked reserves, which as of 31 March 2022 totalled £5.136m. The year-end revenue budget underspend of 77k was allocated to the Transformation Earmarked Reserve, this is in line with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The Capital Receipts Reserve as of 31 March 2022 £548k. *** These figures (£) are unaudited as of 7th July 2022.**

A full explanation of the 2021/22 finances are held within the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts. The annual accounts are subject to external audit each year, the Service's external auditors are Ernst & Young. The link below will take you to the relevant page on the Service's website.

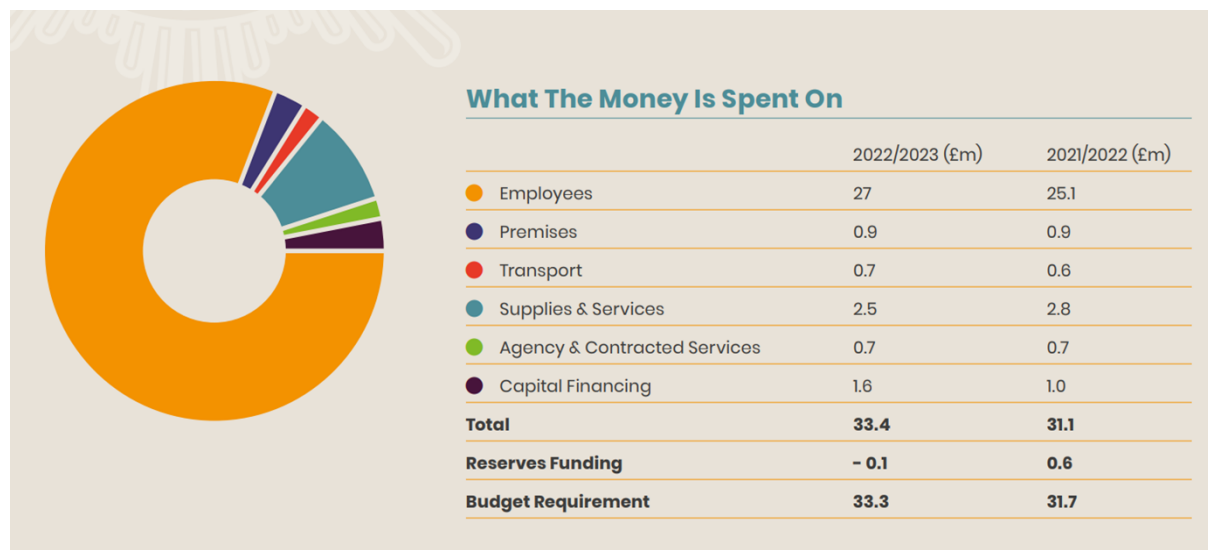
<https://www.bedsfire.gov.uk/About/Finance-and-budget/Statement-of-accounts.aspx>

NB; The Fire and Rescue Authority has a responsibility to publish a statement of assurance on an annual basis which sets out the approach taken to ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place in terms of governance and operational delivery. The statement of assurance will be published later this year (link to follow).

Where does the money come from?



What is the money spent on?



HUMAN RESOURCES

14 employees received their Long Service & Good Conduct Awards in 2021/2022.

This was another considerably challenging year as we again worked with our partners in dealing with the pressures of COVID including leading on the logistical set up of mass vaccination centres around Bedfordshire and secondments to EEAST. The robust COVID secure measures that we adopted, and our business continuity plans enabled services to continue to be effectively delivered during periods of increased activity and/or staff absences.

This was a particularly busy year for our Resourcing Team, at a time when the recruitment market is highly competitive, and roles are becoming increasingly hard to fill. During this time, the team recruited to 22 support roles (Green book), 2 Control posts, 35 Retained Firefighters and 18 Wholetime Firefighters. Several retirements and a restructure within our corporate management team, resulted in the resourcing of 60% of the team. All this recruitment activity inevitably resulted in a high volume of pre-employment checks, contracts of employment and other onboarding activity for the HR Operations Team.

A Recruitment Audit of our operational recruitment process was undertaken by RSM Risk Assurance Services our internal auditors. They confirmed “the Authority can take substantial assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage this area are suitably designed, consistently applied and effective.”

Throughout the year we have maintained contact with our community groups virtually using a range of media platforms. More recently face to face engagements have recommenced with us attending careers fairs and community events. Our Instagram page called WIREbedsfire (Wellbeing, Inclusion, Recruitment and Engagement) has steadily seen the number of its followers increasing.

The Employee Relations Team reviewed and implemented several organisational policies, several which are reward and benefit based as part of our commitment to a transparent approach to pay and to provide benefits that are of real value to our staff. During the year, the team have researched and developed a range of papers and guidance concerning HR procedures to support new ways of working as well as in response to COVID related legislation changes and to help the Service respond to the operational demands of the pandemic. We have continued to support managers across the Service deal with people management issues informally and formally, providing additional support for more complex issues, particularly in a remote environment.

The Occupational Health Team have continued to provide support to employees and managers across a range of absences including COVID. We have made use of our Targeted Health Scheme to expedite diagnosis of certain conditions that had been affected by the delays in the NHS as a result of COVID. The team have also revised our Wellbeing Policy and approach as well as ensuring that there is ongoing mental health support and advice for all employees 24/7.

The Payroll Team have implemented the Gartan Roster module greatly reducing the need for paper claims being printed and posted. A new Cycle to Work scheme was launched with 10 employees taking up the opportunity contributing to improved wellbeing and a reduction in our carbon footprint, whilst also achieving a secondary NI saving of approx. £1330 for the Service. There has also been much work around pay and other terms and conditions of service for additional activities to support our partners, alongside recording and reporting associated salary costs that could be recharged.

The HR Operations Team have also kept up to date with the ever-changing landscape for pension schemes and have ensured that staff have been kept informed of developments within their relevant pension schemes and regularly provided advice and guidance.

Empowering – Equality and Diversity

Having a representative workforce continues to be a Service priority but also remains a sector wide significant challenge.

The recruitment of new staff that declared as Minority Ethnic has exceeded our 2021/2022 target in both On-Call/RDS and Wholetime operational roles and across the whole Service. However, the end

of year data indicates our overall proportion of On-Call and Wholetime operational staff has reduced from the previous year. This reduction is due to there being more operational leavers who declared as Minority Ethnic than those that have joined the Service in the last 12 months.

The Service has been more successful in its recruitment of women into operational roles. It has met the target for recruitment in relation to Wholetime roles and has fallen slightly below target in relation to On-Call roles. The overall percentage of women in all operational roles has not met the annual target but has slightly increased in comparison to the previous year.

The Service continues to actively engage with our underrepresented community groups including positive action initiatives where appropriate and will continue to work to improve our community representation. This was a period where most of our engagement continued to be online/remote due to Covid secure measures the Service had in place. Recently this has moved more towards attending in person events with virtual events still taking place where necessary.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Recruits' courses and conversion courses

Our training and development centre had a remarkably busy year, despite the challenges that were faced adjusting to new ways of working as a result of Covid. Our training instructors adapted the delivery of several courses to ensure the health and safety of personnel was maintained whilst safety critical training courses were delivered.

The training and development centre continued to work alongside our recruitment team in providing courses for transferees and new recruits, including;

- 22 On-call fire fighters attended our initial On-call modular course
- 10 On-call firefighter conversions completed
- 5 Bedfordshire On-call firefighters converted to whole time firefighters
- 10 Whole time apprentices trained
- 1 wholetime firefighter to Bedfordshire wholetime conversion course
- A total of 48 new firefighters trained to start with BFRS

July 21 – 15 existing Fire Fighter apprentices completed their end point assessments. Two firefighters received an overall distinction, with 13 firefighters receiving a distinction in 1 or more of the individual assessment areas.

Feb 22 – BFRS begins its own Firefighter apprenticeship, as a supported provider in collaboration with Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service

Training delivered in 2021/2022

In 2021/22 the training and development centre delivered or facilitated 961 training courses. These ranged from half day manual handling courses through to 14 week On-call modular initial courses.

June 2021 – Delivery of new RTC refresher course began starting a rolling 3-year CPD programme

September 2021 – Training Instructors supported colleagues from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service and the UK Rescue Organisation to deliver the national rescue competition.

October 2021 – Training Instructors from BFRS took part in the National Breathing Apparatus (BA) competition, winning best BA team.

Dec 2021 – BFRS invests circa £85k to upgrade the Firehouse complex to support the delivery of new tactical firefighting courses from 2022.

Feb 2022 – Heavy vehicle rescue training for all watches at Kempston and Stopsley to improve specialist response.

Exercises and assurance

Key performance indicators for Officer Incident command revalidations maintained at 100% during 2021/2022

- April 2021 - Training and Development Centre's incident command team led the Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum to undertake virtual strategic, tactical, and operational response exercises utilising a virtual online training platform for Covid safety.
- June 2021 - Training and Development Centre's incident command team attends the Fire Service College (as part of a 5 Service team) to facilitate several high-rise exercises to test new National operational guidance.
- September - October 21 – Bedfordshire hosts regional multi-agency exercises to train front line staff in the response to a major terrorist incident.
- February 2022 – PDR V5 project goes live, marking a full review of all core training for operational personnel at all levels to best support our operational response.

Learning and Development

Promotion Gateways 2021–22.

We have led on several Promotion Gateways in 2021-22 which enabled 25 successful candidates to enter our Talent Pool and are eligible for temporary and substantive promotion. We have continued to develop and support our candidates by creating a development pool, this is designed for candidates that score above a set benchmark to enable them to retake elements of the process, following feedback and development, these candidates are eligible for temporary promotion. Feedback and development opportunities are offered to support all individuals.

The learning and development team have completed 20 recruitment processes over the past year which have included;

- Incident Command Trainers
- Driving School Instructors
- Fire Safety Inspector
- Wholetime Firefighter
- Level 3 Certificate in Fire Safety
- Crew/Watch/Station Manager Transferees
- Fire Investigators
- Training Instructor
- Control Operators

External and Internal Exercise Assurance

As part of our continued commitment to our national assets, the Service has embarked on several exercises to test our response capability and operational performance. These exercises form part of an assurance plan to monitor the training, equipment, and mobilising arrangements to ensure that these meet the national requirements.

During 2021/22 the Service managed to participate in several exercises, despite the restrictions that were faced as part of the COVID pandemic.

As part of our continued preparation for responding to a terrorist attack our specialist and non-specialist crews participated in several major training live play events. These exercises were attended by over 1500 personnel and agencies ranging from our strategic partners through to representatives from the Home Office.

Procurement Tenders

Over the period of 2021/22, the procurement section has undergone some transformation with changes in personnel and a review of processes and procedures to ensure we are supporting the service to work efficiently and compliantly. We have continued to make optimal use of national and sectoral collaborative opportunities and framework agreements as well as pursuing tender opportunities as appropriate.

We have led on several procurements, variations, and extensions to support the service in fulfilling its objectives, including;

- Supply of hardware and configuration services for replacement Wi-Fi solution (April 2021)
- Business Information Software (June 2021)
- Shower replacements and refurbishments (July 2021 & February 2022)
- Vehicle Leasing & Purchases
- Review of Cleaning provision (September 2021 – January 2022)
- RTC Equipment (October 2021 – January 2022)
- Waste (November 2021 – March 2022)
- Customer Insight Data (October 2021)

The procurement team have also conducted Market Engagement on several projects, including Virtual Receptionist provision and Appliance CCTV.

PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES

Replacement Mobilising Project (RMP)

In November BFRS were the first Emergency Service to go 100% “cloud based” with its new mobilising system, which is connected to the new Emergency Services Network (ESN) for live service. The project delivered a secure connection to ESN and a managed firewall, using Motorola’s cloud-based 3CRS (Command Central Control Room System) with a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD), and linking to Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) fitted with ESN Connect SIM cards, which connects devices to the ESN data service. Using ESN on the MDTs is also a first for Airbus with ESN as a service provider. BFRS is effectively using ESN for live services supporting BFRS front line staff in both Control and on the fireground. The groundwork that has taken place now has ensured BFRS are well prepared for full ESN implementation, as a lot of the pre-requisite “plumbing” has already taken place.

By further integrating our Control solution with other BFRS systems, including whole time, and retained availability management, BFRS will increase efficiencies in the control room by automatically and seamlessly updating our appliance and staff availability

This integration with Gartan, our resource management software, will allow BFRS to manage resource more effectively. It will aid the service to understand dynamically what resources are

available and with what skills, allowing BFRS to increase availability by matching the incident types with the skill sets available at any given time.

This project was delivered on time, within budget and of the right quality.

Command Support Review Project

After a successful tender for the Incident Command software, Airbus was appointed, and the project went live in January 2022 and achieved the following:

Up-to-date modern technologies enabling the service personnel at an incident to have the correct, up-to-date information to hand, to allow staff to make accurate, informed decisions. When making these decisions the outcomes will be logged in the system with a time stamp to aid with a detailed debrief post incident to take place.

The new IC software also improves incident command training by having a platform which provides training for the use on the MDT's for the ability to review risk information, Crash Recovery and Chem-data.

Any new Officer in Charge (OIC) will have knowledge of the Incident Command Unit and the tools this brings to enable the OIC to call on resource and incident information.

Key outcomes:

- Improved situational awareness with Live video streaming via Drones and Body worn cameras. PA: The body worn cameras are being trialed but not fully live yet.
- Effective incident management
- Upgraded hardware and software operating systems
- Improved situational awareness with Live video streaming to the ICU only via Drones and Body worn cameras.
- Emergency Services Network (ESN) compliant
- Support the CRMP action to roll out fire ground connectivity

Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi was upgraded at all stations and HQ from July 2021 to October 2021. This gives much better Wi-Fi coverage due to the increased density of Wi-Fi access points. It supports Gov Wi-Fi so anyone in the public sector with a free Gov Wi-Fi account can seamlessly and securely connect to our Wi-Fi. The new Wi-Fi also allows auto enrolment of Guest Wi-Fi users (with digital approval). The outcomes are a faster, more secure Wi-Fi, supporting flexible working at BFRS locations.

SharePoint

In July 2021 (the old SharePoint was made read only on 1 November 2021), the ageing legacy on-premises SharePoint system was replaced with a new cloud-based SharePoint, as part of the Microsoft Office 365 suite. This enables remote and flexible access via any device and browser, with secure Two-Factor Authentication (2FA). Key benefits are:

- Easy, secure remote access to information enabling flexible working
- Easier faster search facility for document access
- Refreshed look and feel, with a more modern and corporate aligned theme.
- Improve corporate internal communications

- Improve service external communications
- Reduction in the number of paper-based and manual corporate processes
- Improve the BFRS staff experience with SharePoint
- Business systems improvement
- Business process improvement
- Active Action Plans
- Automated reporting
- Business continuity and organisational resilience

Business Management Information System (BMIS)

The new Corporate Risk Register went live Sept 2021. This is a new tool which allows a central repository for updates against risks and actions. It is a cloud-based system, accessible from any browser, giving up to date information and progress against actions. The Corporate planning tool and project management tool are being implemented in quarter 2, 2022.

Course Management System and PDR Pro Upgrade Project

As part of Phase 1 of this project, a new Course Management System (CMS) was linked to the current v3 of PDR Pro. This enabled the decommissioning of the previous Training Centre administration system, MIS Training Planner, supplied by Sophtlogic.

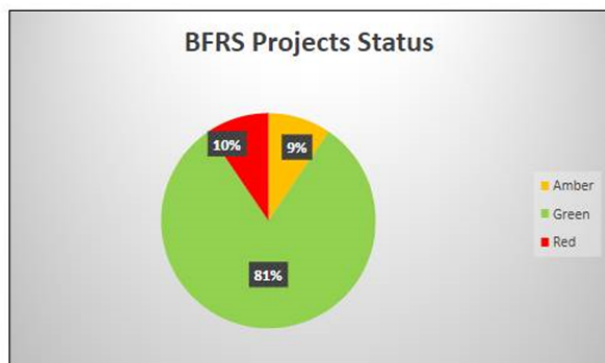
Phase 2 upgraded PDR Pro v3 to a fully supported v5, which was already implemented by the supplier across many other FRSs. The project delivered a rationalised set of core skills and training planners for all operational roles. The upgrade to the fully supported version also allowed us to reduce the administrative burden on staff and to cater for future developments.

Infographics FloSuite Project

In February 2022 we concluded the delivery of the long running and quite challenging Infographics FloSuite project. The new solution is an improvement on the previous Protection system, even though it lacks in some areas. The Protection data can now be more reliably and quickly extracted than from the previous system. Audits by protection staff are entered directly into system by the inspecting officers.

In the final stages of the project the teamwork and collaboration between the Fire Safety Team, Business Information Team, Information Communications Technology and Programme Management Office has helped to progress the project and complete the delivery. We now have a working solution that the inspectors are comfortable using, we can do our reporting effectively, and we are now looking to improve the data loaded into FloSuite.

Project Management



Projects	Count of RAG Status
Amber	2
Green	17
Red	2
Grand Total	21

The Course Management System (CMS) and (Performance Development) PDR Pro Upgrade project (training records), were delivered successfully with the new Course Management System implementation going live in September 2020.

The Service deployed MS Office 365 and are rolling out the Digital Champions Programme with cloud-based storage enabling a more effective collaborative working environment. Digital literacy training and webinars have been provided by 365Tribe and made available to all staff. This has improved the efficiency of working and has supported the remote working during the COVID pandemic lockdown.

The Assets Tracking project implemented the new Asset Tracking System live within 3 stations. This is now used for inventory checking and "task and test" activities, instead of the previous paper-based process. Full rollout is in progress.

The new Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) rollout to all appliances was completed. This project is in closedown, now progressing post implementation review. As part of the Command Support Project, we completed the Incident Command Unit (ICU) hardware refresh in April 2020 and have delivered the Procurement Phase for the Incident Command Software (March 2021), pending contract sign off by the selected provider.

OUR WORK WITH EAST OF ENGLAND AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST

Our support for EEASt began in March 2020 when BFRS decided to live our values and 'dared to be different'! It has continued ever since and our partnership has grown significantly since then with the introduction of a Falls Service, Specialist Rescue Unit, and Co-responding. Stepping forward during uncertain times has allowed both EEASt and BFRS to keep the public safe during a time of national emergency.

Evaluation shows that public services benefit by £7 for every pound we spend, with people in Bedfordshire getting £5.1 million in social value from our combined efforts.

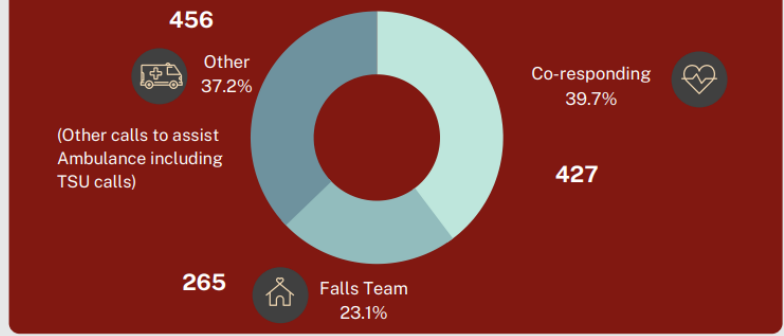
2021/22

BFRS/EEAST COLLABORATION

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue continue to work closely with colleagues at EEAST Ambulance Service to support them in keeping the people of Bedfordshire safe and well

MOBILISATIONS

The number of mobilisations to assist EEAST totals 1148, consisting of:



During the last year we have undertaken;

1148 mobilisations to assist EEAST – consisting of:

- 456 Co-responders
- 265 Falls team/ lift patients
- 427 Other calls to assist ambulance including TSU calls
- Continued to support EEAST with ambulance driving
- Provided logistical support for COVID vaccination and testing centres – 900 hours of support
- Provided Command Support for over 100 multi agency Local Resilience Forum meetings on COVID.

Letters of appreciation

1. 16.04.21 - Thank you from Council colleagues and residents following a house fire in , Houghton Regis who emailed to say a big thank you and a well done for making the residents in the area feel safe and putting their minds at rest.
2. 28.05.21 - Thank you from BCH police who attended the water safety training in Harrold. - I just wanted to write and say thank you for delivering our water training last week. It was one of the best courses we have done and the whole team thoroughly enjoyed it. It was delivered in a relaxed manner, with consideration for all levels and ability with support given to those who needed it.
3. 16.07.21 - Thank you for firefighters from Bedford Green Watch who were flagged down by a member of public to assist an unresponsive male. The crew gave CPR and applied Defib before handing over to EEAST.
4. 23.07.21 - Thanks to Harrold Station from Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service to the attending crews from Harrold community fire station who attended the field fire in Olney. I always admire the dedication and the commitment in the way on-call stations support their local communities. The crew from Harrold worked extremely hard to bring a successful

conclusion to this incident. Their swift response and actions were instrumental in the way the fire was brought under control.

5. 30.07.21 - Leighton Buzzard received a thank you card from a local resident thanking them for their support in delivering food parcels at the start of the pandemic - "My thanks is long overdue, but I want to thank you for your kindness during the first lockdown of this pandemic when you delivered a food parcel. In the most difficult of times for us your act of kindness was much appreciated.
6. 08.09.21 - To the crew @ Luton fire station and the controller who dealt with my request for assistance for my elderly stepfather who needed a ring cutting off on the evening of 8/9. Thank you so much for the prompt response and kindness shown to my parents in dealing with their situation. Your help was greatly appreciated by all the family. Nothing else to say but THANK YOU.
7. 11.11.21 - Compliment letter received from Head of Community Response at East of England Ambulance Service - Dear Potton Community Fire Service, RE: Notification of positive outcome (survival to discharge). I am writing to advise you of the positive outcome of the incident, and to thank you for your involvement in saving this individual. You responded to this patient as a Fire Responder, providing pre-hospital emergency care, and providing a vital link in the delivery of this positive outcome. Thanks to a combined effort we were able to reach this patient in 06:26 minutes. Following the resuscitation effort by EEAST and conveyance to hospital, this patient was Transferred Alive. On Behalf of the Trust, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your actions and involvement within this incident, because of you this person is alive today. With the ever-increasing demand upon our service for a broadening range of problems it can sometimes be easy to overlook the reason for the ambulance services' existence. Without you and your colleagues completing their roles so effectively I am positive that this outcome would not have been so favourable for the individual concerned.
8. 02.12.21 - Thank you letter received from The Bedford Hospital Charity - Dear Friends, on behalf of the Charity I would like to thank all the Crew of Bedford Fire Station for so quickly coming to our help to put the star on Connie's Tree. For the past two years we have been collecting money for the Hospital with the aid of the lit tree. The money this year will go to our £1m Appeal for a Children's A & E also a C T Scanner at Bedford Hospital. Thank you for all you have done and what you are doing.
9. 09.03.22 - Compliment received - Thank you so much to the crew that came out to us at the Hospital tonight! I'll never forget hearing the call made through to control. 'Can confirm we have a 4-year-old, female child who is stuck in a shape sorter, commencing rescue now' The firemen were brilliant, so friendly, chatty, and reassuring with her whilst I had my hands full with my 10-month-old after a long wait at the hospital. A much-welcomed sight and rescue after multiple attempts from various people to free her. Thank you, we will always remember this day!