



**Bedfordshire**  
Fire and Rescue Service

## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2018/19



Statement of Assurance 2018/19

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## 1. Introduction

The Government set out the high level expectations and requirements for Fire and Rescue Authorities through the [Fire and Rescue National Framework \(England\) 2018](#).

The Framework is issued under Section 21 of the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) with the stated purpose to give Fire and Rescue Authorities the freedom and flexibility to deliver services to their communities, moving accountability away from Central Government and placing responsibility with local communities.

Under the National Framework, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (BFRA) have a responsibility to publish an Annual Statement of Assurance which provides a report on the Service's performance in the previous year with regard to:

- **Financial:** How BFRA ensures that public money is properly accounted for, managed, audited and reported along with management of financial assets and the production of the Annual Statement of Accounts which is produced in line with accounting codes of practice.
- **Governance:** How BFRA ensures that it conducts its business lawfully and that public money is properly accounted for and managed economically, efficiently and effectively and that an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is published.
- **Operational:** How BFRA operates within a clear defined statutory framework including key documents such as National Framework and the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 etc.

The Statements of Assurance is required to be published annually and where possible form part of the existing governance reporting arrangements. This Statement of Assurance is subject to normal scrutiny arrangements which comprise of:

- Approval by the Audit and Standards Committee, who oversee the production of the Annual Statement of Assurance;
- Presented to the Full Fire and Rescue Authority Meeting by the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee; and,
- Published on the Service's website.

In summary this Statement of Assurance aims to provide information to the Communities, Government, Local Authorities and Partners in an easy and accessible way, so a valid assessment can be made of their local Fire and Rescue Authority's performance during 2018/19.

## **2. Financial Assurance**

BFRA is a precepting authority; this means that its net cost, after receiving Government Grant and a proportion of local business rates, is met by all council tax payers in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire Borough and Luton as a proportion to the valuation band of their home.

BFRA has the responsibility for ensuring that public money collected by way of grant and council tax is properly accounted for and managed appropriately in accordance with Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. This responsibility extends to securing the continuous improvement in which BFRA's functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

As part of managing the financial arrangements of the Authority, BFRA have robust control measures in place for protecting the public purse which are supported by accurate budget monitoring processes which are subject to rigorous scrutiny and reporting.

The Treasurer to the BFRA has the responsibility for ensuring that the right measures are in place to manage the Authority's financial assets and that the financial reporting arrangements are sound and that the Annual Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with statutory requirements.

The [Statement of Accounts](#) for the year ending 31 March 2019 is a document that summarises BFRA's transactions for the previous financial year detailing how the funding was used to provide a Fire and Rescue Service to the communities of Bedfordshire and includes:

- a) The Statement of Responsibilities for the [Statement of Accounts](#) which sets out the responsibilities of the FRA and the Treasurer to the FRA;
- b) The [Annual Governance Statement \(AGS\)](#);

- c) The Movement in Reserves Statement which summarises the FRA's spending against the council tax it raised, taking into account the use of reserves during the year;
- d) The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement which summarises the income and expenditure of the FRA;
- e) The [Balance Sheet](#) which displays the financial position of the FRA as at 31 March 2019;
- f) The [Cash Flow](#) Statement which summarises the changes in the FRAs funds; and,
- g) The Pension Fund Account for the year together with the Net Assets Statement at the year end.

The Accounts are supported by a Statement of Accounting Policy and Core Financial Statements and these are prepared by the Finance Team under the direction of the Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer to the BFRA.

The Statement of Accounts is signed off by the Chairperson of the Audit and Standards Committee who oversees the audit activity, regulatory framework, accounts and standards of the Service and these are prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices that include:

- [Accounts and Audit \(England\) Regulations 2015](#) ;
- [The Local Authorities \(Capital Finance and Accounting\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2015](#); and,
- [International Financial Reporting Standards \(IFRS\)](#).

BFRA are subject to independent external audit and scrutiny to ensure that appropriate and effective financial arrangements are in place.

At the conclusion of the audit for 2018/19 the Annual Audit Letter was produced which reported on the audit of the Authority's Financial Statements and an assessment of the arrangements to achieve value for money in the use of resources.

In summary the auditor's provided an unqualified opinion and stated that the Financial Statements of BFRA:

- Give a true and fair view of the financial position of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority as at 31 March 2019 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and,
- Have been prepared properly in accordance with the [Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19](#).

In addition, the auditors concluded that on the basis of their work, having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria published by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), they were satisfied that, in all significant respects, BFRA put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2019.

### **3. Governance Framework**

BFRA is made up of twelve elected members who are appointed in proportion to the number of local government electors in each constituent Authority area with Members from the three Local Authorities of Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire Borough and Luton comprising:

- Three members from Bedford Borough Council;
- Five members from Central Bedfordshire Council; and,
- Four members from Luton Borough Council.

The responsibility for ensuring proper governance arrangements and controls rests with BFRA who enable the effective exercise of the Authority's functions and the management of risk. The Governance Framework includes systems, processes, culture and values to enable BFRA to monitor the achievement of strategic objectives and consider whether the objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services to the communities of Bedfordshire and stakeholders.

BFRA's governance framework derives from seven core principles identified in the International Framework: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: [Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework \(CIPFA/SOLACE\) Review of Annual Governance Statements 2016/17](#)

The seven core principles are:

1. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law
2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
3. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
4. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
5. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
6. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
7. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

### **3.1 Annual Governance Statement**

The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2018/19 explains how the BFRA manages its governance arrangements and internal control measures. It is an open and transparent account of how the BFRA ensures its financial management systems are adequate and effective, as well as ensuring there is a robust and sound system of internal control.

The AGS also explains how BFRA has complied with the Code and meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 in relation to the publication of an Annual Governance Statement. BFRA's financial arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA – Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. The Treasurer to the BFRA reports in this role directly to the Chief Fire Officer.

### **3.2 Internal Audit**

The role of internal audit is to review the internal control framework that governs the operations of the BFRA and, in so doing, provide an independent opinion to both Management and Members of the BFRA on the robustness of the Authority's internal control environment. Each year an Internal Audit Plan is produced and developed by the auditors, in conjunction with the Assistant Chief Officer – Finance and Corporate Services and Treasurer to the BFRA and is based on a risk assessment of all the services/systems of the Authority. Members and Service Managers are directly involved in the development of the plan and it is subject to review by the Corporate Management Team (CMT), prior to being approved by the Audit and Standards Committee.



In summary, the plan identifies the audits to be completed each year, including core fundamental systems and other operational systems.

The appointed Internal Auditors also work with both Essex and Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) as part of a joint contract and where possible are able to audit on areas of commonality and shared service areas across all three FRAs. The work of the audit team complies fully with the requirements of CIPFA's Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK.

The Annual Internal Audit report for 2018/19 by the Service's appointed internal auditors, RSM, advises that "Based on the work we have undertaken on the system of internal control, we do not consider that within these areas there are any issues that need to be flagged as significant control issues in the AGS. However, we would expect the Authority to consider in the formulation of the AGS, the internal control weaknesses identified within our partial assurance opinion, along with the actions taken to address the issues identified".

### **3.3 External Audit**

BFRA remains committed to continuing to improve its performance towards achieving excellence in all areas. Value for Money (VFM) is still part of an annual review carried out by the Service's external auditors with an opinion whether the BFRA is delivering VFM as part of the external auditor's annual report and whether the BFRA has proper arrangements for:

- Securing financial resilience; and,
- Challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

An integral part of this assurance is the role of the external auditor in the annual review report which complies with the statutory requirements governing audit and inspection work, in particular:

- National Audit Office's 2015 Code of Practice, International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland);
- The 2018/19 Code of Practice; and
- Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

On 9 July 2018 External Audit issued an unqualified opinion on the 2017/18 Statement of Accounts. In the auditor's opinion, the Statement of Accounts provided a true and fair view of the financial position of the BFRA and have been prepared properly in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.

Additionally the Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The 2018/19 accounts are due to be finalised in October 2019.

In July 2017 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) gained the statutory responsibility of the inspection of Fire and Rescue Services in England and Wales and became Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). This was the first time that Fire and Rescue Services have had an inspectorate in over a decade.

HMICFRS initial inspection of the 45 Fire and Rescue Services in England was split in to three tranches. BFRS was inspected in the first Tranche with the main fieldwork carried out during August 2018. All Fire and Rescue Services inspections would have concluded during 2019 and the final Tranche reports are due in December 2019, along with a 'State of the Nation' report reflecting on the first full round of inspections.

The inspection framework is built around three key questions:

1. How **effective** is the Fire and Rescue Service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
2. How **efficient** is the Fire and Rescue Service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
3. How well does the Fire and Rescue Service look after its **people**?

No overall grading is given for the Service as a whole. However, separate grading's are given for the three key inspection areas. BFRS was graded as 'Good' for Effectiveness and as Requires Improvement for Efficiency and People.

In addition to commenting on a number of strengths and achievements by the Service. HMICFRS identified 23 areas for improvement (AFI) within the [report](#). These AFI's were developed into an action plan to drive Service improvement, and further supported by objectives contained within the CRMP 2019-23.

### **3.4 Committee and Groups**

BFRA has adopted a Constitution which sets out how the Authority operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people and stakeholders.

BFRA meets a minimum of five times per year and has established an Executive Committee, Audit and Standards Committee and three Policy and Challenge Groups. This Governance structure aligns with the Service structure ensuring a more interactive relationship between Elected Members, managers and employees, and facilitates the scrutiny role of Members more visibly effective.

The Audit and Standards Committee and Policy and Challenge Groups have responsibilities covering all areas of the Service to ensure that the Service is functioning efficiently and effectively. This is achieved by providing checks and challenges, monitoring performance and approving associated policy and activity. These Groups make recommendations on matters within their terms of reference to the Authority according to their area of concern.

The Chairs of the Audit and Standards Committee and Policy and Challenge Groups report any recommendations arising from these meetings to the meeting of the Full FRA. Reporting will also include on-going policy and decision making which is facilitated by a clear framework of delegation set out in the Authority's Constitution, including details of delegated authorities to officers.

All reports are reviewed for legal, human resource, financial and risk considerations prior to being presented to Members of the BFRA for formal decision-making. This, together with an appropriate level of delegation to both the Authority Executive and Senior Managers, enables prompt decision making.

Following the decision at a full FRA meeting where it reviewed the governance arrangements, during 2019/20 the BFRA is trialling having an additional two FRA meetings and no Policy and Challenge groups. The Audit & Standards Committee remains in place too.

### **3.5 Review of Authority Effectiveness**

Historically the BFRA publishes an Annual Review of the Fire Authority's Effectiveness and Record of Member Attendance. Implementation and formal review of the agreed actions arising from the Annual *Review of Effectiveness* is then incorporated as a standing item in each year's Annual Governance Statement.

In 2018 the BFRA commissioned RSM, its internal auditors, to carry out a review of the governance arrangements for the Authority. The Review suggested a number of areas which, if implemented, may improve the efficiency of the Authority and reduce the bureaucratic burden on the Fire and Rescue Service whilst supporting it at a time when resources are increasingly under pressure.

The Review covered:

- Number and functionality of BFRA meetings
- Location of meetings
- Staffs requirement of Members
- Structure of Policy and Challenge Groups
- Members' Allowances.

Whilst this process was undertaken, BFRA deferred the Annual Review of Authority Effectiveness.

### **3.6 Internal Control Framework**

BFRA has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the Corporate Management Team (CMT).

The Internal Auditors provide an annual opinion on the internal control framework and operate to standards set out in the *Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK*. The key features of the Authority's internal control framework, which directly contribute to the review of effectiveness are:

- The Fire and Rescue Authority;
- The Audit and Standards Committee;
- Internal Audit;
- External Audit;

- Assurance Statements; and,
- Internal Performance Management Framework.

BFRA has a robust Performance Management Framework in place for securing continuous improvement in its services and where the quality of service to the communities can be measured by the use of local performance indicators.

Other forms of measures include:

- External performance assessment, external inspections,
- Peer reviews,
- The Authority's internal reviews and audits,
- Appraisal and objective setting for the CFO (by FRA),
- Consultation exercises,
- Service improvements identified by the Authority's Customer Care Complaints and Compliments procedure.

An integral part of the performance framework includes the setting of organisational key performance indicators. These are agreed and monitored on a bi-monthly basis by senior managers of the Service with performance being reported through the Corporate Management Team, the Authority's Policy and Challenge Groups, and to full FRA Meetings.

For the year ending 2018/19 the Annual Internal Audit report advised that the Auditors were satisfied that sufficient internal audit work had been undertaken to allow them to draw a reasonable conclusion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's arrangements.

### **3.7 Data Transparency**

In accordance with the *Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency*, BFRA is committed to greater openness and financial transparency through the publication, on the Authority's website, of information regarding how public money is spent. This includes payments for goods and services to external bodies and suppliers above £500, and details of salaries and allowances paid to staff and Members.

In doing so, BFRA utilise a number of information sources and data sets to improve the delivery of service to the communities and reports its performance accordingly. The performance data and information is published in the form of reports against targets and outcomes showing the performance of BFRA.

#### **4. Operational Assurance**

The National Framework does not prescribe operational firefighting matters; this is determined locally by respective FRAs. However it does set out the government's priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England that include:

- Identifying and assessing the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks in the respective areas;
- Making provision for prevention and protection activities and responding to incidents appropriately;
- Working with partners within the communities both locally and nationally to deliver their services; and,
- Being accountable to communities for the service they provide through the 'Statement of Assurance'.

FRAs operate within a clear defined boundary of a statutory framework that has a number of key documents that outline responsibilities, these include:

- [The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004;](#)
- [The Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005;](#)
- [The Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007;](#)
- [The Localism Act 2011;](#)
- [The Fire and Rescue National Framework;](#)

- [Local Government Act 2010](#); and,
- [Health and Safety & Work Act 1974](#).

In addition to the statutory framework and assurance detailed above, BFRA has a range of key performance indicators and measures reported throughout the year. An integral part of operational assurance includes prevention and protection services and emergency response standards; these are regularly monitored and reviewed by the Service and the FRA by:

- Internal audits of service delivery functions;
- Quarterly performance reporting against station-based targets;
- Formal evaluation of prevention and protection activities; and,
- Full summary report of performance for the previous financial year.

#### **4.1 Performance Summary**

BFRA oversees the performance of the Service throughout the year by the monitoring of robust and challenging Performance Indicators (PIs) and associated targets, aimed to maximise the effort and resources of the Service.

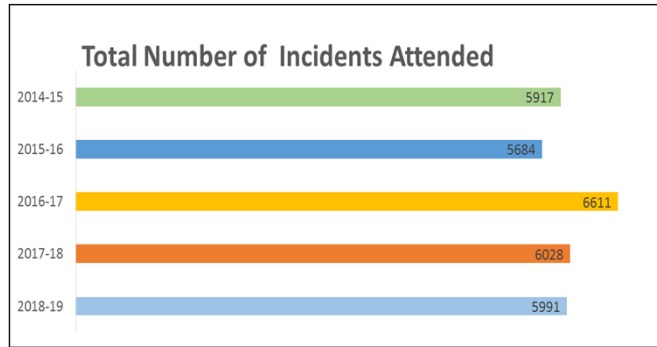
The Service Delivery PIs have been reviewed for 2019/20 and approved by the FRA. Full details of the Service's performance for 2018/19 and comparison against performance for 2017/18 is reported within the [Annual Overarching Performance Report 2018/19](#).

#### **4.2 Overview of Service Activity**

The following charts provide an overview of the Service's Emergency Response, Prevention, and Safe and Well activities over a five year period to provide a balanced view of performance over the short and medium term. In particular, providing examples of incident types the Service attended.

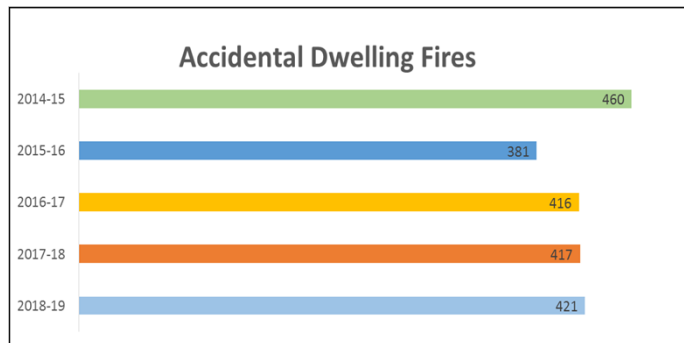
#### 4.2.1 Total Number of Incidents Attended

The number of incidents attended by the Service has fluctuated over the five years but now shows a three year downward trend. The figures for 2018/19 demonstrate a 0.6% reduction in the number of incidents attended compared with 2017/18; this equates to a reduction of 37 incidents attended only. The number is anticipated to increase as more collaborative activity expands our capabilities (e.g. forced entry for medical emergencies, assisting the Police).



#### 4.2.2 Accidental Dwelling Fires

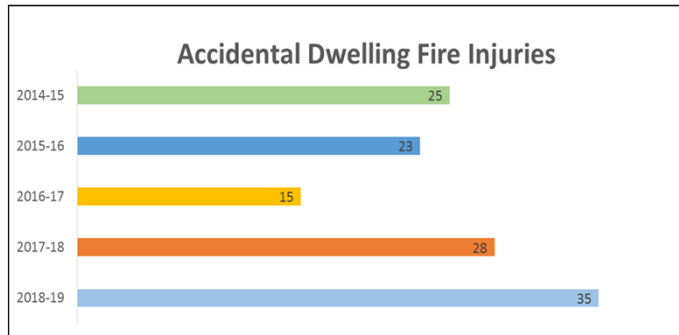
Accidental Dwelling Fires are fires that occur in the home and the number across Bedfordshire during 2018/19 totalled 421. This shows a very minor increase from 2017/18. With the exception of 2014/15 the number of Accidental Dwelling Fires has been stable at around 400. BFRS continues to explore areas which will assist our commitment to drive down the number of Accidental Dwelling Fires across Bedfordshire.





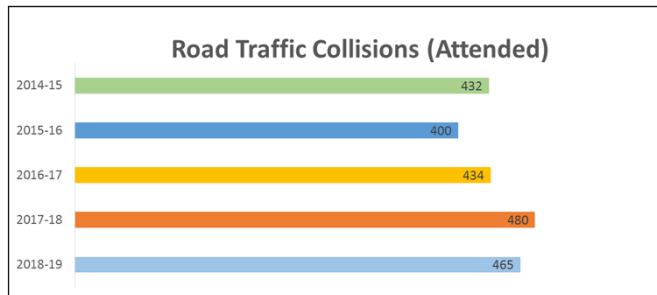
### 4.2.3 Accidental Dwelling Fire Injuries

Accidental Dwelling Fire Injuries continue to be one of the lowest reported within England; however the Service recognises an increase for the second successive year. BFRS continues work with partner agencies in order to target advice and guidance on domestic fire safety awareness to those most at risk in the community.



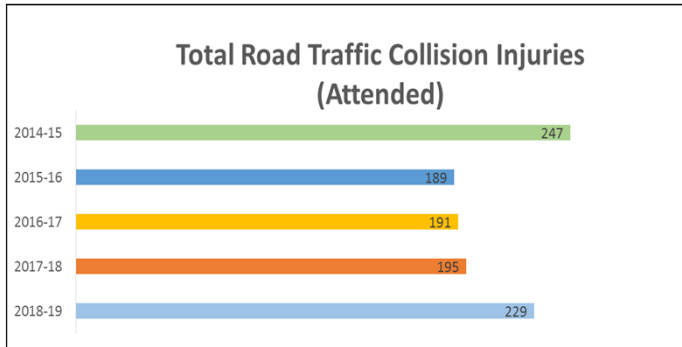
### 4.2.4 Road Traffic Collisions (Attended)

The Service has been seeing a year on year increase in the number of Road Traffic Collisions attended up to 2017/18, however in 2018/19 we have seen a 3% decrease.



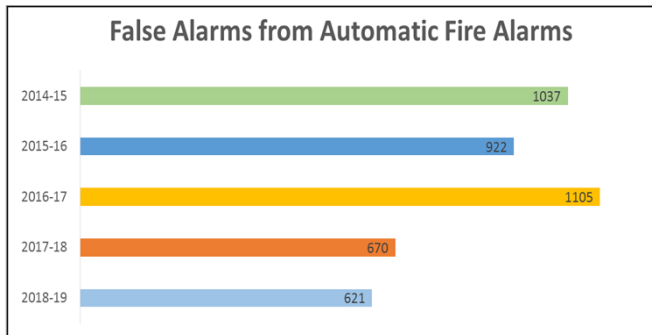
#### 4.2.5 Road Traffic Collision Injuries (Attended)

The amount of Road Traffic Collision Injuries had been steady for the past three years, however there has been a 17% increase in 2018/19; the highest recorded period remains 2014/15.



#### 4.2.6 False Alarms from Automatic Fire Alarms

During 2018/19 the Service attended 621 calls to False Alarms from Automatic Fire Alarm Systems, this is 49 less calls than the previous year. The Service continues to target the reduction in False Alarms from Automatic Fire Alarm Systems and is applying further measures to support this.



#### 4.2.7 Total Home Fire Safety Checks/Safe and Well Visits

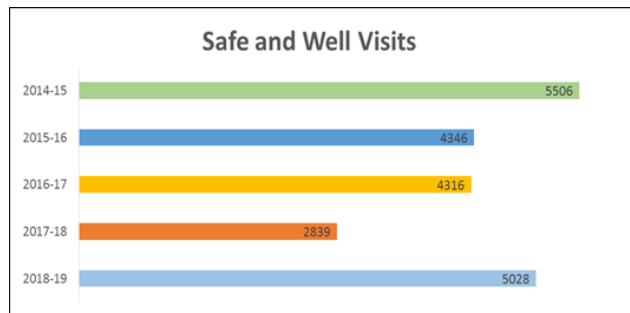
The Service uses a variety of preventative risk reduction activities in its continued commitment to keep the communities' of Bedfordshire safe.

In 2018/19 BFRS continued to deliver Safe and Well visits to the community. The Service increased the expected targets which resulted in an increase of 77% from 2839 to 5028 visits. 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:

- Crime Prevention;
- Slips, Trips and Falls;
- Smoking cessation; and
- Alcohol.

BFRS works closely with Bedfordshire Police and has identified that fire risk factors closely align with the risks associated with vulnerability to crime. As such, Safe and Well visits will incorporate crime prevention advice.

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

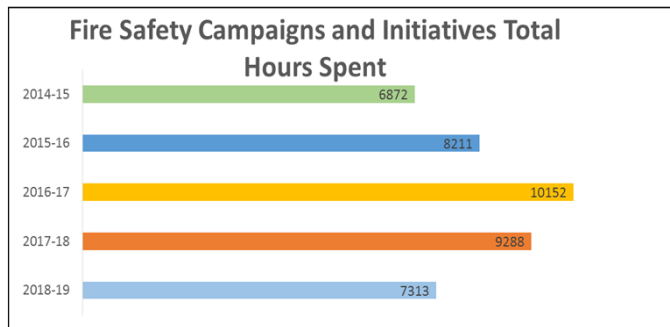


In 2017/18, following the tragic events at Grenfell, BFRS undertook an inspection of all high rise residential premises in Bedfordshire to assess risk levels and provide assurance to residents, owners and firefighters.

#### **4.2.8 Total Hours spent on Community Safety Campaigns and Initiatives**

The number of hours spent on Fire Safety Campaigns and Initiatives have shown an increasing commitment over the four year period to 2016/17. A more intelligence-led, targeted approach in the past two years has seen a decrease the number of hours spent.

The Service continues to deliver a broad range of risk reduction interventions and themed safety campaigns. These include school visits, working with young people, Fire Cadets, road safety advice for all road users, and seasonal advice including electrical safety, chimney safety and cooking safely in the home plus many others.



### **4.3 Community Risk Management Plan**

The Community Risk Management Plan 2015 - 2019 Summary (CRMP) is the Authority's programme for securing continuous improvement in its services and outlines the Authority's vision, objectives and priorities for the future, sets performance targets and outlines the Authority's accountability to its stakeholders and the communities.

Within Bedfordshire the assessment of all fire and rescue related risk to life and injury formulates the basis of the production of the CRMP. When identifying priorities for the CRMP the views of stakeholders and the communities are taken into account to ensure that they are aware of the aims, objectives, priorities and performance of BFRA.

The CRMP aims to inform our communities of our plans and ensures that the Service contributes, in a coordinated and meaningful way towards keeping our communities safe. The CRMP is a long term plan that is refreshed annually to assist the Service in being more agile and responsive to locally identified needs and trends. This approach enables the effective targeting of resources to prevent incidents occurring in the first place, whilst putting resources in the right location to best protect the communities.

In 2018/19 BFRS carried out further research to understand our communities to inform our approach to risk. A new CRMP for 2019-2023 has now been issued and will be referenced during next year's Statement of Assurance.

Each quarter we consult those people who have received a Safe and Well Visit and those businesses who have taken part in a Fire Safety Audit, as well as those involved in incidents, to ensure they have been satisfied with the services they receive from BFRS. This ensures BFRS continually monitor our customer service and are able to respond to any issues that might arise when delivering services to our communities.

### **4.4 Mutual Aid and Reinforcement Schemes**

[Sections 13](#) and [16](#) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 place a requirement on all FRAs to enter in to Mutual Aid agreements with neighbouring FRSs. The purpose of these agreements is to enable the summoning of assistance to provide and utilise resources such as fire engines when required to attend a range of incidents. In addition to Mutual Aid, FRAs, as far as is practicable, should enter into Reinforcement Schemes, for securing mutual assistance between authorities and for the purpose of discharging their functions. BFRA has in place mutual agreements with neighbouring FRAs. In addition the

Service, through National Resilience, provides specialist appliances and crews for mass decontamination. See 4.6.

#### **4.5 Business Continuity Arrangements**

The [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) and the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#) places a legal duty for all FRAs to write and maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurs the Authority is able to continue its functions.

In response to these duties BFRA has robust Business Continuity Management (BCM) plans in place which are integral in managing corporate risk and provides, in the event of a major disruption, a Fire and Rescue Service to the community. The BCM plans cover a broad range of interruptions for specific events such as wide spreading Pandemics through to individual functional disruptions within the Service. These plans provide resilience arrangements across the entire Service.

In summary our BCM plans provide clear and defined strategies to be adapted to aid achievement of the following objectives:

- Provide a response to events that threaten the delivery of services to the community of Bedfordshire;
- Protect the Service from business interruptions;
- In the event of business interruptions to provide a coordinated recovery; and,
- Facilitate a risk management culture embedded into the Service to enable risks to be identified and managed effectively.

#### **4.6 National Resilience**

The UK Fire and Rescue Service forms an integral part of the Governments National Resilience capability as Category 1 Responders.

Category 1 Responders include Blue-light emergency services as well Local Authorities and NHS hospitals etc. where the capacity and capability of FRSs work together with Category 1, and Category 2 Responders (Utilities/Transport infrastructure providers etc.) to deliver a sustained and effective response to major incidents, emergencies and disruptive challenges.

In addition to working with other FRAs, BFRA work closely with and are members of the [Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum](#) (BLRF) which is a statutory body covering a police force area, designed to bring together Category 1 and Category 2 Responders for multi-agency co-operation and information sharing. This is in line with the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) which states every area of the United Kingdom is required to establish a Local Resilience Forum.

BFRA is a major contributor to national and regional resilience with the capability to respond to major disasters and terrorist attacks where some types of incident that are larger in scale may require a Fire and Rescue Service response.

BFRA are actively involved in National Resilience arrangements and hold a Module for Mass Decontamination. The Service also has Water Rescue national assets which have been mobilised to assist other Fire and Rescue Services on several occasions, this would be following requests from the National Resilience Fire Control based in Merseyside.

BFRS, one of several FRSs in the UK have a Special Response Team (SRT) to support Police and Ambulance operations. This team is exercised on a regular basis with other Category 1 Responders ensuring that the team is ready for operational deployment. As part of the assurance process to the Service, the Specialist Response Team were audited in 2016 as part of the National Audit Programme and a number of areas were highlighted as notable practice.

## **5. Awards and Commendations**

The Long Service and Good Conduct medal is awarded to operational members of the Fire and Rescue Service who have completed 20 years meritorious service and are awarded under Royal Warrant. In 2018/19 nine members of the BFRS were awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

Each year the Service hosts a Celebration of Success Awards night, where staff are recognised for their personal achievements in education and development, professional conduct, community and charitable activity and meritorious service.

## **6. Future Improvements**

The financial settlements from Central Government for FRAs since 2010 have significantly reduced, leading to the need for increased efficiencies from existing resources and developing new ways of working to meet the funding reductions. The Authority's CRMP process is the principal route for the development of a balanced approach to reducing risks within the community and to the delivery of future improvements.

During 2019/20 The Service will continue with its pursuit of collaborative projects which deliver efficiency savings as well as deliver benefits to the communities it serves.

In 2018, and following a recommendation from an RSM Internal Audit in 2017, the Service has worked closely with Bedfordshire Police. Both Services have strengthened the process which generates potential projects and established a more inclusive and organisation –wide mechanism for engagement with front line staff.

During 2018/19 a Blue Light Collaboration Governance structure supporting the FRA has been established. The structure includes enabling processes for whole organisation contribution to collaboration.

A Blue Light collaboration conference was held in August 2018 and its success in identifying future collaboration possibilities and priorities means it will be repeated twice yearly.

Current collaborative projects already under way for 2019/20 include the following:

- An increasing number of Police colleagues are being provided with access to Service premises to help them manage their time more efficiently and achieve higher visibility in local communities.
- The Service is continuing with assisting Police colleagues in searches for missing vulnerable people following a positive evaluation in 2018.
- The Service is working with Police colleagues to develop a Memorandum of Understanding for a joint response capability for deployment unmanned aerial vehicles, which could include wider agreement with emergency colleagues in neighbouring counties.



- 4 Workstreams; Working with Young People, Vulnerability in the home, Streets and Events and Arson management, which were identified as priority at the bi-annual Collaboration conference in February 2019 are being taken forward into options appraisal.
- The Service is increasing its support for the National Dementia Action Alliance and a new service action plan is being developed in 2019/20. Under this plan, the managers within the Service undertook “Dementia Friends” awareness training at a Management Briefing session.
- The process for safeguarding people with dementia, the “Herbert Protocol” partnership with Bedfordshire Police will continue into 2019 and beyond.
- There are plans to enable electronic membership applications on the Service website.
- The Service is now providing a Dementia “Safety First” Home Safety Scheme in Partnership with NHS.
- In 2019/20 and working with a range of NHS, Public Authorities and the Private Sector to explore the potential for a “Rapid Response” service to people who are at risk under the “Frailty” agenda.
- Work began in 2018/19 and continues in 2019/20 to explore a joint Driver training collaboration which enables Response car driver training during peak demands for Bedfordshire Police.
- Work completed in 2019/20 established a trained and competent team of Motor Cycle Instructors Motor cycle training. It is now possible to train other Blue Light organisation and in 2019/20 consideration of marketing the training will be given.
- In 2019/20 collaboration between the Service and Police Communications and Public Relations teams began and closer working strengthened through a six month’s secondment to the Service from the Police was arranged. Work will continue to achieve a seamless approach to community news and engagement.
- In 2019/20, The Service and Police jointly recruited to a countywide Chaplaincy service which is due to commence in November 2019.

Once completed, delivered and integrated these projects will provide improvements to service delivery, safety of the community and partners.

## 7. Conclusion

This Statement of Assurance provides an accurate account of Bedfordshire b Authority's Financial, Governance and Operational Assurance arrangements secured from the 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

I am satisfied that Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority conducted its business practices within the appropriate legal framework and standards and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. This Statement of Assurance was approved by the Audit and Standards Committee on **xxxxxxx**

Signed  
Chief Fire Officer



Signed  
Chair Audit and Standards Committee on behalf of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Signed  
Chair of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

## **GLOSSARY**

AGS - Annual Governance Statement

BFRA - Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

BFRS – Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

BLRF - Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum

BCM - Business Continuity Management

CIPFA - Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

CRMP - Community Risk Management Plan

C&AG - Comptroller and Auditor General

CMT - Corporate Management Team

EEAS - East of England Ambulance Service

FSOT – Fire Service Operations Team

FRA - Fire and Rescue Authority

HR - Human Resources

IFRS - International Financial Reporting Standards

PIs - Performance Indicators

VFM - Value for Money