

OFFICIAL

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority Efficiency and Productivity Report

March 2023



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE
Making the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier

Contents

Introduction	3
2023/24 Budget and Reserves	4
2023/24 Revenue Budget	4
Earmarked and General Reserves 2022-2027:.....	4
Precept 2023-24	6
Efficiency	7
Planned efficiencies in 2023/24 – Risk Based Crewing	7
Planned efficiencies in 2023/24 – Non-Pay	7
Transformation Plans	7
Asset Management – Vehicles	9
Asset Management – Estates	9
Digital Investment	10
Innovation in Crewing	11
Procurement.....	11
Charging policy and income generation.....	12
Collaboration.....	13
Shared estates	13
Shared Fire Control	13
Prevention Referrals.....	13
Integrated Care Systems.....	13
VRU/Serious Violence Duty.....	14
Productivity:	15
Firefighter activity	15
Challenges with measuring productivity in the Fire and Rescue Service.....	16

Introduction

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA) is committed to delivering an effective, efficient, and productive service that delivers against our vision of making the people of the West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Healthier. The Fire and Rescue National Framework sets a requirement that Fire and Rescue Authorities produce and publish annual efficiency plans. There is a specific requirement from the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire that in 2023/24, FRAs produce plans that not only cover planned efficiencies, but also their plans for increasing productivity.

Our success in [our 2021/22 HMICFRS Inspection](#) highlights our commitment to delivering excellent services to the people of the West Midlands. We were rated as 'Outstanding' for our overall effectiveness, our response to fires and other emergencies, and our understanding of risk. We were rated 'Good' in all other areas, including in our overall efficiency, our use of resources, and our affordability now and in the future. The Inspectorate specifically highlighted that "the service is good at making sure its workforce is productive."

This high standard of performance has been delivered following over a decade of reducing real-term budgets and significant efficiencies. Our frontline, operational workforce is 25% smaller than it was in 2010. Our vital support staff workforce, which delivers not only vital functions like finance, HR and IT but also directly delivers frontline services such as prevention, is 35% smaller. Our funding in 2023/24 is smaller in cash terms than it was in 2010/11. This is in part because dedicated capital funding has been withdrawn for all fire and rescue services, meaning capital investment has to be sourced from revenue budgets or reserves.

These reductions in workforce have come at a time of increasing requirements being placed upon services. Incident complexity continues to grow, and Government has rightly placed additional expectations on services in areas like culture, recruitment, resilience, and fire safety. These have all required additional investment and will continue to do so, which has to be found from budgets that have fallen significantly in real terms in the past 12 years.

At this point, it is important to be clear that there is limited scope for true efficiencies, i.e. delivering more or at least the same with less. Instead, further reductions in spending would represent cuts to services that would reduce our service effectiveness, in other words delivering less with less. Having worked extremely hard to be the only service in England rated "outstanding" for our effectiveness by HMICFRS, this is something we will work hard to avoid.

Nonetheless, we recognise we need to continue to innovate and improve productivity and reassure the communities we serve that our service represents value for money. This report outlines some of the steps we've already taken to deliver an effective service and how we will deliver more during 2023/24.

2023/24 Budget and Reserves

More information on WMFRA's budget and precept for 2023/24, and the 2024/25 and 2025/26 Budget forecast [can be found in the report](#) presented to WMFRA in February 2023.

2023/24 Revenue Budget

	Original Budget 2023/24 £000s
<u>Expenditure</u>	
Employees	106,733
Premises	7,588
Transport	2,191
Supplies & Services	11,356
Capital Financing	7,931
Appropriations to Reserves	100
Efficiency Savings	(1,074)*
Total Expenditure	134,825
<u>Income</u>	
Government Grants	(60,601)
Non-Domestic Rates	(10,346)
Income from Services	(3,387)
Collection Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	(1,053)
Appropriations from Reserves	(5,574)
Total Income	(80,961)
COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT	53,864
Collection Fund Surplus / (Deficit)	1,053
Core Funding (Formula Grant)	46,521
Core Funding (NNDR)	10,346
Section 31 Grant	7,325
NET REVENUE BUDGET	119,109

*The budget report assumed a 6% pay award increase in 2022/23, the actual pay award of 7% creates an additional cost of £800K in a full year and so the total efficiency saving required in 2023/24 £1.9m

Earmarked and General Reserves 2022-2027:

	31/03/22 £000s	31/03/23 £000s	31/03/24 £000s	31/03/25 £000s	31/03/26 £000s	31/03/27 £000s
Corporate Funding						
Forecast Capital Program Shortfall	9,368	5,852	0	0	0	0
Insurance Reserve	6,732	3,732	3,732	3,732	3,732	3,732
Detriments	2,000	1,000	0	0	0	0
NNDR & Local Tax Income Guarantee	1,995	0	0	0	0	0
Sustainability	180	100	0	0	0	0
Operations						
Tech Rescue	846	0	0	0	0	0
Project Management/Support	173	0	0	0	0	0
UK ISAR	45	0	0	0	0	0
Partnerships	36	0	0	0	0	0
Fire Control & Business Continuity						

OFFICIAL

Command Delivery	27	17	0	0	0	0
Prevention						
Education Materials/Facilities	94	0	0	0	0	0
Community Partnerships	91	72	0	0	0	0
Community Safety	18	0	0	0	0	0
Protection						
Building Risk Review Programme	401	0	0	0	0	0
Protection Fund Grant	329	0	0	0	0	0
Fire Safety	91	0	0	0	0	0
Project Management/Support	85	60	0	0	0	0
Response, Policy & Organisational Assurance						
Procurement of Operational Equip	2,471	3,235	0	0	0	0
Command Delivery	360	100	0	0	0	0
CBRN	249	150	100	50	0	0
SSRI/RIDGE	135	0	0	0	0	0
Tech Rescue	45	0	0	0	0	0
COVID-19 Funding	19	0	0	0	0	0
Resourcing						
Property Maintenance	679	479	0	0	0	0
Pension Admin Grant	236	200	0	0	0	0
Vehicle Chargers	78	0	0	0	0	0
Agile Working	60	47	0	0	0	0
Loss of Use Recovery	10	10	0	0	0	0
Digital & Data						
Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP)	1,252	1,020	750	450	200	0
Other Digital Transformations/Upgrades	560	0	0	0	0	0
Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)	556	0	0	0	0	0
Staffing	298	165	0	0	0	0
Incident Reporting System (IRS)/Command	139	139	0	0	0	0
Communications & Engagement						
Community Engagement	10	0	0	0	0	0
Comms/Media Events	2	0	0	0	0	0
Employee Relations						
Project Management/Support	4	0	0	0	0	0
Organisational Learning & People Development						
Staff Training & Development	47	0	0	0	0	0
Health, Safety & Wellbeing						
Health, Safety & Wellbeing	58	0	0	0	0	0
Staffing	37	0	0	0	0	0
Total Earmarked Reserves	29,816	16,378	4,582	4,232	3,932	3,732
General Reserve	3,858	3,858	3,858	3,858	3,858	3,858
% Net Revenue Budget	3.6%	3.2%	3.2%	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%
Total Reserves	33,674	20,236	8,440	8,090	7,790	7,590

Precept 2023-24

WMFRA fully recognise the impact of a precept rise on our communities, particularly given the ongoing pressures on cost of living. Any such increase must be necessary and on the basis of further investment and improvement to services. In 2023/24, the Authority has increased the service's precept by £4.99 for a band D property in line with the precept flexibility offered by the Government.

This additional funding is necessary for us to protect front line services, invest in vital equipment and technology (given the continued lack of dedicated capital funding) and absorb the significant inflationary pressures facing the service. The combination of significant inflationary pressures, historical efficiencies, and the need to invest in key service delivery areas, means that without the increase in precept, the service would face the need to degrade front line service provision.

WMFRA is currently the lowest precepting fire authority in England and has managed significant reductions in our budget and staffing since 2010. It is worth noting that even with this precept increase and the increase in the settlement as a whole, the budget for WMFRA in 2023/24 is still lower than it was in cash terms in 2010/11. We have absorbed these budget reductions whilst continuing to provide excellent public services, as was reflected by our recent HMICFRS inspection report.

More detail can be found in the [2023/24 Council Tax Leaflet](#) published on our website.

Efficiency

Planned efficiencies in 2023/24 – Risk Based Crewing

Despite the increase in precept in 2023/24, our budget assumes **£1.9m** in efficiencies within 2023/24 to set a balanced budget. Beyond this, WMFRA remains committed to driving value for money in our service delivery at all levels and will explore and exploit opportunities to free up funding to invest in services that make our community safer.

The required £1.9m in-year savings will be met from the continued roll out of our Risk Based Crewing approach. Risk Based Crewing is an evolution of Dynamic Mobilising, where Fire Control can alter the number of appliances sent to certain types of incidents, using intelligence from callers, collaboration with partners and digital innovation (such as 999Eye) to assess the risk posed at an incident and tailor an appropriate response.

Risk Based Crewing goes further by allowing Fire Control and officers on station to not only alter which vehicles are sent, but also the number of crew attending a certain incident. By removing the restrictions of five on a PRL (a regular fire engine) and three on a smaller Brigade Response Vehicle (BRV) our staff are empowered to use the available crew more efficiently.

Not only does this allow us to respond to incidents proportionately, but it also permits increased simultaneous activity (such as training or prevention interventions) to occur, and a similarly proportionate approach to prevention and protection activity, therefore further reducing risk in our communities.

So far, Risk Based Crewing has been rolled out to all our “core” stations, which have a single full-time PRL and single full-time BRV. This has produced annual efficiencies of **£2.47m** while increasing overall appliance availability. In 2023/24, our intention is to use this approach more widely, which will enhance operational flexibility and produce required savings.

Planned efficiencies in 2023/24 – Non-Pay

As outlined below, WMFRA continues to drive efficiency within procurement through various means. In 2023/24 we are targeting savings of **£250k** across our procurement function.

We also anticipate a total of **£100k** in non-pay savings as a result of the wider roll out of Risk Based Crewing mentioned above. This will come from savings associated with reduced fuel, maintenance and other costs as a result of changing vehicle usage.

Transformation Plans

As part of our agreed 2021-2023 Community Risk Management Plan West Midlands Fire Service is taking forward a number of Transformation Projects (aside from Risk Based Crewing) designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the service.

Transformation Project	Description
Blended Fleet	<p>The project aims to develop a fleet of vehicles that support people-based mobilising, facilitating a proportionate and flexible response to all incident types, reducing wasted resources. This will also allow crews to use the most appropriate vehicle to deliver prevention and protection activity.</p> <p>This project also includes our commitment to develop a fleet that reduces our environmental impact.</p>

OFFICIAL

<p>Reducing Health Inequalities</p>	<p>Reducing Health Inequalities is a coordinated set of activities looking at health inequalities which increase a person's risk and vulnerability to fire and other emergencies.</p> <p>This is being delivered through new prevention training and development for staff, utilising a wider range of data to help us target prevention activity and strengthening partnerships (see Collaboration below) including with Integrated Care Boards.</p>
<p>Emerging Risks</p>	<p>The project aims to deliver enhanced capability & capacity to deal with identified emerging risks including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change – increased flooding and wildfires • Terror-related incidents • New infrastructure – such as HS2, new high rise buildings • Increased high-risk and major events <p>This is being delivered by the creation of a third Technical Rescue Station at Sutton Coldfield, the ongoing integration and increased resilience of our Technical Rescue function as a whole within the service and the roll out of Prevent training to all staff to improve our ability to identify radicalisation of vulnerable people and signpost to appropriate support.</p>
<p>Dynamic Mobilising</p>	<p>The project is delivering research designed to provide a greater evidence base to support decisions around dynamic mobilising. This will improve our understanding how our initial level of response to an incident can be more proportionately aligned to the actual/known risk of at the point of call. This may see us respond with more or fewer resources to ensure the most effective resolution of an incident.</p> <p>This work has been delivered in collaboration with academic partners.</p>
<p>Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs)</p>	<p>The vast majority of Automatic Fire Alarms are false alarms, so we want to ensure that we respond proportionately to them to reduce resource costs and ensure our appliances remain available for real emergencies.</p> <p>We are targeting a number of building types which are responsible for a large number of AFAs to offer enhanced call challenge and reduce our level of response where a fire is not confirmed. This has already been implemented for University Accommodation and Hospitals, which has seen our smaller BRVs used more frequently and larger PRLs used less often in response to AFAs. In 2023 this approach will be expanded to care homes across the West Midlands.</p>
<p>Sustainability</p>	<p>As part of our commitment to the wider West Midlands regional target of Net Zero by 2041, West Midlands Fire Service is committed to improving the overall environmental sustainability of our service and of our communities, as part of a wider ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) Framework.</p>

	<p>Beside from changes to our vehicles covered under the Blended Fleet project, this includes collaborating with academic institutions within the West Midlands to explore idea such as concepts for “fire stations of the future” that are more self-sufficient and carbon neutral, as well has how we can contribute to the wider community’s sustainability and resilience to the impacts of climate change.</p> <p>To further improve energy efficiency and reduce the Authority’s carbon footprint, several energy saving programmes are already in place as part of the Property Asset Management Plan (see below). This includes improvements to building fabric such as insulation, continued phased boiler replacements, improvement to water & space heating controls and in addition, compliance with Part L Building Regulations (Conservation of Heat and Power) will be achieved or exceeded on applicable schemes.</p>
--	---

Asset Management – Vehicles

During 2023, the service’s Fleet Management Team will be undertaking a full evaluation of the new All Electric “B” Type Fire Appliance that has been released by Emergency One to London Fire Brigade to ensure it meet operational requirements, prior to proposing any recommendations for future procurement. However, this new vehicle is a duplicate of a traditional fire engine, and we recognise that there is an opportunity to work with manufacturers to design and build the fire service “vehicle of the future”. Such a vehicle will support the execution of our approaches to flexible crewing, dynamic mobilising and our digital first approach to deliver assertive, effective, and safe firefighting.

The team will also focus on all other alternative fuel types available within the current and emerging market sectors as replacement for both diesel and petrol variants within the service fleet in line with national and regional sustainability targets.

In addition, consideration is also being given to future overall operational fleet requirements given advancements in vehicle technologies and any potential changes in service delivery arrangements. This includes potential investments in additional vehicles to fully realise our Risk Based Crewing and Blended Fleet projects, which may increase total vehicle numbers but allow us to utilise our people resources more efficiently and flexibly.

Work will continue to be focused on the remainder of the fleet to explore and deliver replacement vehicles that extend the current numbers of hybrid or electrical vehicles, and this will be considered as the primary option for all vehicle procurement. Consequently, the Service needs to progressively move towards a vehicle fleet which utilizes alternative fuel options with several replacement vehicles being either hybrid or full electric as part of the 2023/24 vehicle replacement programme.

Asset Management – Estates

The Service maintains a flexible Property Asset Management Plan to ensure the ongoing effective and efficient use of our estate. The service operates from forty-one sites throughout the West Midlands, including thirty-eight fire stations, our Headquarters and other support buildings as well as residential units located on certain station sites.

Fundamental to the Property Asset Management Plan is an assessment of whether the Service operates from an appropriate number of sites. This is particularly relevant in

OFFICIAL

determining fire station numbers and whether all of the sites are actually required and, if so, whether the current location is appropriate. For a number of years, studies have been carried out to assess the incidents that have occurred in the West Midlands conurbation via the Community Risk Management Plan and it has been determined that existing fire station sites remain appropriate.

We continue to look at ways of increasing the use of our HQ site, including through shared estates (see below). In 2023/24 we will explore opportunities to bring some elements of our training provision from dedicated sites to HQ. This will reflect a continuation of our Distributed Training Model, where training is delivered at various station sites rather than a separate training academy, having sold that site in 2014.

The capacity for major changes to our estate is limited by the removal of dedicated Capital grants to authorities, meaning all significant works have to be funded from revenue budgets or reserves, including regular capital maintenance of existing buildings.

Digital Investment

WMFRA is committed to being a digitally enabled service and to realising efficiency and productivity gains through investment in digital technologies. This is all delivered through our comprehensive Digital, Data and Innovation Strategy. Recent and ongoing investments include:

- **Oracle Cloud** – a multi-year programme started in 2020 which has seen the service move multiple legacy systems over to a single Oracle Cloud solution. The new system now manages financial, procurement, personnel and other areas within one system, with Oracle Learn the next area to be launched in April 2023. This has improved integration between our systems, and increased productivity by removing duplication and time spent working between systems. The new system also opens up opportunities for further efficiency and transformation by allowing us greater ownership, control and access to organisational data, using powerful dashboard tools.
- **Tymly** – this mobile-first system was developed in-house and is used to support a range of our activity including Fire Safety, Safe and Well visits, Safe and Strong visits, and operational incidents underpinned by a Corporate Gazetteer and associated management tools. Now used by multiple other fire and rescue services, Tymly has also been used nationally to help provide data to the Home Office during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Office 365** – We are using Microsoft 365 services/solutions within the cloud to support the organisation's plan, enhancing business productivity. We are replacing legacy and outdated processes and solutions and transform them digitally using Microsoft technologies and automation. This includes areas such as communication, collaboration, and business intelligence using products such as SharePoint Online, Microsoft Teams, Power BI. COVID-19 proved a particularly strong driver of this transition

WMFRA is also committed to better utilising data and evidence we gather to help drive improvements in both efficiency and productivity. This includes investing to ensure we can bring together existing data sets and information sources to better exploit them and collaborating with others to gain access to new data sources. This in turn will help us better utilise our resources, be that for operational response or targeting prevention and protection activity.

Innovation in Crewing

WMFRA have been at the forefront of utilising different approaches to crewing to ensure we can best match resources to risk. Innovations introduced include:

- **Brigade Response Vehicles** – in place for over 10 years, these are a smaller vehicle typically crewed with three people (but can be crewed with two) which is designed to respond to smaller incidents or as part of a response to larger incidents.
- **Risk Based Crewing** – described above
- **Late crewing** – On a number of our stations we crew one of the two appliances between only 10am and 10pm, with the other crewed 24/7, which aligns resource availability to the busiest periods in those station areas. This reduces the total resource usage and keeps vehicles available when they are most needed.
- **Voluntary Additional Shifts (VAS)** – allowing our firefighters to work additional shifts alongside their usual work pattern, giving us greater flexibility to manage our total staffing – keeping more appliances on the run but reducing the chance of over-staffing.

There are no Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters within West Midlands Fire Service, the last RDS station having been closed in 2008. Due to the Service's highly urban make-up and densely populated geography, the RDS model proved inefficient, with a nearby full time appliance always able to attend more quickly than a retained crew.

Procurement

The Service's Procurement Section is a key contributor and participant of the NFCC National Procurement Hub (NPH), previously known as the Fire Commercial Transformation Programme.

The three main principles of the NPH are centred around collaboration, standardisation and strategic supplier and contract management. These objectives are being achieved through working with other Blue Light Organisations, Public Sector Bodies or Public Buying Organisations such as Crown Commercial Services (CCS), Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) or Health Trust Europe.

Since the work of the NPH began several collaborative Framework agreements have been established under the Operational Equipment Category. The majority of these Frameworks were let and are managed by WMFS. Some Frameworks involve working collaboratively with the ambulance service to achieve cross sector efficiencies.

There are six national procurement categories:

- Operational Equipment
- Fleet
- PPE & Clothing
- Professional Services
- ICT
- Facilities Management and Construction

WMFS look to utilise all Frameworks that are produced or promoted under any of the above categories as well as Frameworks that are available to FRSs via the Police, Ambulance, NHS and other professional buying organisations. Only when a suitable Framework is not available or doesn't represent value for money would WMFS look to tender or obtain quotes independently.

OFFICIAL

Examples of commodities purchased by WMFS via National Frameworks include: -

- Structural Firefighting PPE
- Uniform & Workwear
- Emergency Response Vehicles
- Commercial vehicles
- Breathing Apparatus
- Emergency Response Equipment e.g., Rescue Tools, Thermal Image Cameras, Hose and ancillary equipment, PPV fans, etc
- Safe & Well equipment
- Working at height equipment
- Fuel and Fuel cards
- Water Rescue equipment & PPE
- Utilities
- Smoke alarms
- Gas monitors
- OSB
- Tyres
- ICT Hardware (Laptops, Servers, keyboards, docking stations, etc)
- Microsoft Licences
- Software & systems
- Cleaning consumables

Charging policy and income generation

It is the strategy of West Midlands Fire Service to comply with the legislative provisions within the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The act empowers Fire Authorities to use the service and their equipment for purposes other than firefighting, which we call Special Service Calls, when required, and to make a charge for any service rendered. Full details are published in our [Special Service Calls Policy](#). Income from Special Service Calls is extremely limited, as the purpose of the policy is to deter non-emergency calls and ensure resources are maintained for emergency response.

However, the service does create income from a number of sources, summarised below.

Income Source	Budgeted Income 2023/24
Shared Fire Control (with Staffordshire FRS)	£1.1m
Training provision (including Business Education Safety team)	£253k
Property Rental/Shared Estates	£155k
ICT Provision (including Tymly)	£114k

Collaboration

Collaborating with other blue light organisations and other local partners is a key means of delivering a more effective and efficient service. We are committed to wider and deeper collaboration in a wide range of areas, which are summarised below.

Shared estates

The Authority is keen to work with partners to share accommodation and facilities where appropriate and so achieve better value for money and wider community benefits.

During 2023/2024 the aim will be to continue to identify further opportunities to enhance community partnerships without undermining existing community arrangements.

In addition, the Service is keen to keep pace with ever changing demands on its building stock and demonstrate value for money through efficiently used property assets driven by both the Government focus on effective property management and by good asset management practice to ensure appropriate space utilisation (be it by partnering arrangements, rationalisation of stock, or re-profiling budgets considering life cycle costing).

For example, the West Midlands Police Service currently occupy areas at six WMFRA sites: Haden Cross, Billesley, Kings Norton, Northfield and Dudley Fire Stations and more recently WMFS HQ

In addition, Wolverhampton City Council youth offending services occupy one of our buildings on a ten-year lease at the Wolverhampton Fire Station site and Birmingham City Council Library Services relocated their Aston Community Library to the ground floor of Aston fire station.

Shared Fire Control

Staffordshire FRS and WMFS have had a joint Fire Control function based at WMFS HQ in Birmingham, which has been in place since 2014. This arrangement provides additional resilience to both services and also brings in around £1.1m of income to WMFS annually.

Prevention Referrals

Safe and Well visits are a core part of our prevention offering, and we strive at all times to ensure our prevention activity is targeted to the most vulnerable, so as to maximise their value. Referrals from partner organisations, such as local authorities, housing associations, charities and health services is a key means of reaching those most in need of our help. When a partner identifies someone who they believe is at increased risk of harm from fire or other emergencies, they can refer them to us for a visit. Equally, we also ensure that our staff have the training and understanding to make appropriate referrals to other services where they identify need or vulnerability.

We set ourselves a key target of 50% of all Safe and Wells being sources from a partner referral, which sits alongside a target of increasing the average risk score of each of our Safe and Well Visits.

Integrated Care Systems

We have recognised that new Integrated Care Systems are a key partner in our efforts to reduce health inequalities which increase a person's vulnerability to fire. As a result, we have engaged with and are now part of all three of the Integrated Care Systems within the West Midlands region, allowing us to engage with NHS and public health partners to identify opportunities for referrals, collaboration and commissioning services.

VRU/Serious Violence Duty

As part of the delivery of the recently enacted Serious Violence Duty, West Midlands Fire Service is a key partner within the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit, which will deliver a Violence Reduction Strategy for the West Midlands. We will also be engaging with the new subgroups set up with each of our seven Community Safety Partnerships to consider local problem profiles for serious violence.

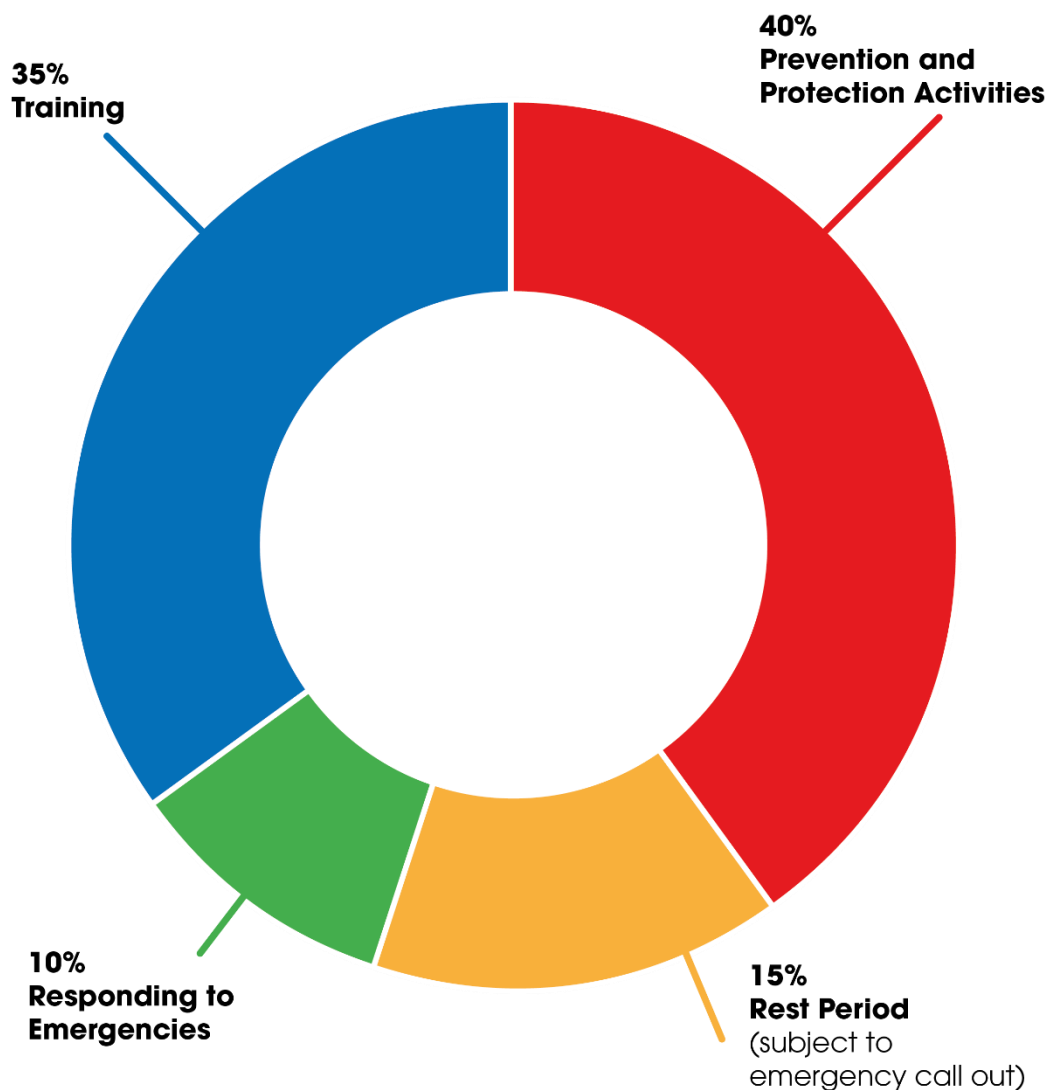
Productivity:

WMFRA are committed to the nationally agreed productivity target of 3% per annum. We are committed to ensuring that our staff utilise their time, and many of the projects and partnerships outlined already within this report are designed to save our staff time and reduce waste.

We will be introducing additional productivity measures as part of our revision of our Key Performance Indicators during 2023/24. These will aim to move beyond simple measures of activity to true measures of productivity and effectiveness which can demonstrate improved value for money and better outcomes for communities.

This is linked to our focus on improving our use of data, linking existing data sets and accessing new sources of information and evidence. We will better use our data to identify opportunities for change and improvement and then track our performance against clearly defined targets.

Firefighter activity



Our firefighters do so much more than respond to emergencies. Although this is of course the most important part of their role, it typically only takes up less than 10% of their total time on shift. Our aspiration is for our crews to use their time as effectively as possible, honing

OFFICIAL

skills, improving knowledge and delivering vital prevention and protection interventions, both in person and remotely. The above chart outlines our aspiration for firefighter activity on a typical day.

When not responding assertively and safely to incidents our crews will undertake numerous activities, including but not limited to:

- **Safe and Well Checks** – visiting people in their homes to provide safety advice, fit safety devices and make referrals to further support. This activity is targeted at the most vulnerable people in our communities, which may include the elderly or those with mental or physical illnesses.
- **Safe and Strong visits** – visiting businesses to support them to keep their “business in business” and protect from fire and other risks.
- **Site Visits** – visiting high risk premises and locations within the local area to ensure crews are familiar with risks and procedures. This includes visits to high-rise buildings which may present specific risks in the event of a fire.
- **Community Engagement events and visits** – station open days, school visits and community events present opportunities to share prevention advice and encourage people to consider firefighting as a career open to all.
- **Training** – from online e-academy courses to physical fitness to live fire training, firefighters are expected to maintain a wide range of skills and competencies which require comprehensive training both on station and elsewhere.
- **Exercises** – larger scale training events undertaken both internally and with partners from other fire service, police, ambulance and others.
- **Maintenance and checks** – cleaning and maintaining equipment and vehicles to ensure readiness for operational response.
- **Administration** – completing incident reports and workbooks, management activities, and providing important information that supports our service delivery and allows us to measure efficiency and productivity.

Challenges with measuring productivity in the Fire and Rescue Service

WMFRA are committed to participate in, and provide data for, sector wide utilisation surveys. We recognise the value and importance of driving improved productivity in the sector, and in being open and transparent with the public. However, we believe it is important that any measure of productivity are comparable between services, and measure outputs, rather than simply activity.

Measures that simply record the number of hours taken on certain activities – be that training, prevention interventions, or response to incidents – do not take account of the significant differences in quality of those activities.

For example, WMFRA take a qualitative rather than quantitative approach to measuring our prevention work. This involves measuring the average vulnerability of the people we visit, rather than simply the number of visits that take place. Success may mean seeing fewer people who are higher risk, as these interventions will typically take longer and there may be more work involved in gaining access. We believe this is a more productive use of time than delivering simpler and easier interventions in to a large number of less vulnerable people. However, a simple measure of quantity or activity may characterise this as a less “productive” approach.

OFFICIAL

Similarly, training, post-incident activity and even administration tasks can vary hugely in quality or productivity depending on what they involve and how they are carried out. Indeed, simply measuring time spent on such activity as “productive” may perversely incentivise taking longer to complete tasks than would otherwise be the case.

It is also important that any information collected is comparable between services, taking account of different approaches to crewing, vehicle types etc.