

# Annual REPORT 2012-13

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## FIRES REACH ALL-TIME LOW

Fire Chiefs say they are delighted that the number of fires in Cheshire is now at the lowest level ever recorded but have vowed to continue campaigning for more safety improvements in the future.

Figures show that the total number of primary fires – those involving homes, businesses, cars, injuries and incidents where more than five fire engines were used – fell to 1,181 in 2012-13, a reduction of more than a third over the last five years.

There were four fire deaths during the year and 52 fire-related injuries, again a reduction on the previous year.

“We have a very clear focus on making Cheshire safer for everyone and these excellent results are largely due to the hard work of our staff in providing safety advice and help to those most at risk,” said Fire Authority Chair Cllr. John Joyce.

*We have always believed strongly that prevention is better than cure and even though we face major cuts in our funding, we think it is more important than ever that we continue investing in our community safety work.*

In 2012-13 the Service carried out nearly 23,000 visits to high risk households across Cheshire, giving out key safety advice and fitting free smoke alarms as part of its Home Safety Assessment (HSA) programme. Over the last 10 years firefighters and community safety advocates have completed over 357,000 HSAs throughout Cheshire.

“There is no doubt that our work has been a key factor in reducing fires to their lowest ever level in Cheshire but we can’t be complacent,” added Chief Fire Officer Paul Hancock.

*That’s why our high profile campaigns for the fitting of sprinklers and smoke alarms to be compulsory are vital if we are to maintain these safety improvements going forward.*

**For more performance information see page 6**

### Investing in the future



Cheshire Fire Authority Member, Cllr Stef Nelson, hands over the keys to a new fire engine that will be based at Runcorn Fire Station. The vehicle is part of the Authority’s continued investment in firefighting equipment.

## Safety plea to public

Fire chiefs are reassuring communities that they will still be able to provide a fire and rescue service across Cheshire during any potential industrial action by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

Members of the FBU have voted in favour of industrial action as part of a dispute with the Government over plans to reform firefighter pensions.

But Cheshire’s Chief Fire Officer Paul Hancock said: “We have put in place plans and procedures that will enable us to continue to protect the communities of Cheshire if strikes go ahead.

“Clearly, however, there will be fewer fire engines and firefighters available than normal and we would urge residents and businesses to take extra care by following our key safety messages.”

Public safety campaigns are underway, while the Service’s website – [www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk) – will carry up to date information about the potential strikes. Residents are urged to follow the Service on Twitter @CheshireFire or visit it on Facebook at CheshireFRS.



Share fire safety - talk to family and friends - see the website

## New system to keep you Alert

A new system aimed at keeping local communities across Cheshire informed about incidents, emergencies and key safety campaigns is being launched by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The Fire Alert System is a free two-way community messaging system allowing people to receive important alerts from the Service not only by text message but also by email and phone.

“Incidents and emergencies can have a very real impact on the lives of residents and workers and it is important we continue to develop ways in which we can let people know what is going on,” said Deputy Chief Fire Officer Mark Cashin.



“This system offers us a fast and efficient way of providing basic updates and safety advice and I hope that as many Cheshire residents and business owners as possible take just a couple of minutes to register for this free service”.

The secure countywide portal has been developed in partnership with Cheshire Police and means users can also register to receive updates from them and other partners.

Registration is via the Service’s website and users can put in their home or work post code or that of a relative and choose what alerts they would like to receive. People without the internet can call 01606 868422.









# for a safer Cheshire

Service intends to implement over the next

local council boundaries, the proposals are available on [www.fire.gov.uk](http://www.fire.gov.uk) to see a full copy of the



## Halton

### Proposals:

1. Runcorn – change the crewing of the second fire engine to on-call from 2014-15
2. Widnes – stop crewing the second fire engine with support provided by the new station at Penketh from 2015-16

- Key
- Wholetime
  - ▲ Day crewed
  - On-call
  - ◆ Nucleus
  - ★ Proposed stations



## Cheshire East

### Proposals:

1. Macclesfield – introduce a new crewing system for the main fire engine during 2014-15
2. Knutsford – change to on-call from 2015-16
3. Alsager – open a new on-call station with one fire engine in 2015-16
4. Congleton – remove the second engine and change the station to a nucleus crewing arrangement in 2015-16
5. Crewe – crew the second fire engine by on-call staff from 2016-17
6. Wilmslow – no change.



Scan this code with a smart phone to go to our online consultation.



# Operational excellence

Training its operational staff to the very highest possible standards has remained a top priority for the Service.

Thankfully major incidents are a rare occurrence, however, it remains vital that fire crews are exposed to realistic training scenarios to prepare them just in case something serious happens.

The Service's Command Training Group has overseen a number of training events both at Headquarters and out on location.

The events, which involved crews from across Cheshire as well as volunteers playing 'live casualties', all involved very realistic scenarios that were designed to test the crews' practical application of skills and the incident commander's decisions.

The training scenarios have included chemical leaks, fires in high rise buildings and incidents at major public events.

In addition to this sort of training the Service's state-of-the-art Incident Command Training Suite continues to use the very best in virtual technology to ensure that Cheshire has some of the best prepared crews in the country.



# Safety Day triumph



The third annual Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service Safety day was another success as firefighters joined forces with staff from across the organisation to help spread some winter warmth.

The event, which was entitled, 'Get Set for Winter', focused on cold weather awareness as well as the standard fire safety advice. More than 850 residents, many of who were older more vulnerable people, were visited on the day as the Service aimed to create safer communities.

Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority, Cllr John Joyce, took part in delivering Home Safety Assessments on the day. He said: "The day was a fantastic success and one that saw us directly engaging with hundreds of older people in their homes."

## Summary of accounts 2012-13



### Fire Authority

Cheshire Fire Authority is the public body which manages the fire and rescue service on behalf of local communities. It is made up of 23 elected Members, with eight appointed by Cheshire East Council, seven by Cheshire West and Chester, three by Halton Borough and five by Warrington Borough. The current political make up of the Authority is Labour (12), Conservative (9), Liberal Democrat (1) and Independent (1).

The Authority is a separate legal body and has the power to set council tax and agree its own policies and procedures without needing the approval of these local councils. Its meetings are open to the public and are usually held at the Service's Winsford headquarters full details are on the website – [www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk)

Its key duties include setting the annual budget, agreeing the numbers of staff and levels of equipment necessary to provide an effective service and approving the organisation's key policies, plans and strategies.

It is also responsible for ensuring its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is properly accounted for and how it aims for continuous improvement. To

demonstrate this it produces an Annual Governance Statement to accompany the Statement of Accounts, available via the Service's website.

From 2013-14 there is also a requirement under the new Fire and Rescue Service National Framework to publish an annual Assurance Statement. The first statement will be made available on the Service's website in December 2013.

### Accounts

The Fire Authority's accounts show how it uses its resources to deliver a fire and rescue service across Cheshire. The summary accounts below provide an overview of where the funds come from, how they are used and the financial position as at March 31st 2013.

### Summary Revenue Account

The 2012-13 Fire Authority budget was £44.7m, with total expenditure incurred of £44.5m resulting in an underspend of around £200,000.

The Authority has a General Reserve of £6.7m. This has been assessed as proportionate to the risks facing the organisation and balances the current public sector financial position with the need to ensure there are

sufficient funds to deal with major incidents.

In line with the continuing financial pressure it faces, the Authority has developed a range of options to deliver future savings. Implementing some of these will take time, however, and it is recognised that the reserves will be needed to smooth the financial pressure over the next few years.

### Summary Balance Sheet

The Summary Balance Sheet shows the 2012-13 end of year position and the most obvious point to note is the net liability of £358.9m. In other words, the Fire Authority has assets worth £50.9m, but has long term liabilities of £409.8m.

Most of the liabilities relate to all expected future pension costs – £405.9m, compared to £349.7m in 2011-12. All local authorities are required to recognise this liability in their balance sheet even though it is not an immediate call on their resources, but instead is paid out over the life of our existing and future pensioners.

At present, all deficits on the Firefighters' Pension Scheme are funded by Government through a specific top up grant.

Summary Revenue Account 2012-13	£'000	£'000
Community Fire Safety	4,607	
Firefighting and Rescue Operations	31,687	
Corporate And Democratic Core	695	
Non-Distributed Costs	67	
<b>Net Cost of Service</b>		<b>37,056</b>
Other income, expenditure and adjustments	7,476	
<b>Amount to be met by Govt Grant and Local Taxation</b>		<b>44,532</b>
Revenue Support Grant and Local Taxation	-19,664	
Council Tax	-25,064	
<b>Net General Fund (Surplus)\Deficit</b>		<b>-196</b>
Balance on General Fund brought forward	-6,545	
<b>Balance on General Fund Carried Forward</b>		<b>-6,741</b>

Summary Balance Sheet 2012-13	£'000	£'000
Long Term Assets	35,677	
Current Assets	19,858	
Long Term Liabilities	-409,766	
Current Liabilities	-4,634	
<b>Total Assets less Total Liabilities</b>		<b>-358,865</b>
<b>Financed by:</b>		
Unusable reserves	380,770	
Earmarked Reserves	-15,164	
General Reserve	-6,741	
<b>TOTAL NET WORTH</b>		<b>358,865</b>

A full copy of the Statement of Accounts is available on our website - [www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk) or by telephoning 01606 868815.



# Focus on Performance 2012-13

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service closely monitors and manages its performance so it can improve the way it protects the safety of local communities. For 2012-13 a new scorecard approach to performance reporting was developed using segments to represent different aspects of the organisation and provides an overview of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) across the Service's main activities. Each segment displays a small number of KPIs and shows performance against targets set for the year as well as performance compared with the previous year.

## Community Outcomes

It is remarkable that the number of fires attended by the Service continues to be driven down. The number of primary fires during 2012-13 was 1,181 which is the lowest level ever recorded for Cheshire. Of these, just over a third were accidental dwelling fires (ADFs). Deliberate primary fires reduced by around a quarter compared with the previous year, as did non-domestic premises fires.

There were four fire deaths during the year, all occurring in house fires. While the number is very low, the details known about these tragic incidents highlight the importance of continually refining our targeting policy to ensure we maximise data sharing arrangements with other organisations to reach individuals at highest risk of fire. Our target every year will be zero deaths so performance against this indicator will show red until that ambition is achieved.

In addition to the fatalities, there were 52 fire-related injuries recorded. This is slightly lower than the previous year, although higher than the target that was set at the start of the year. Around a fifth of these injuries were classed as serious and these were mostly burns - the rest were recorded as slight injuries, the majority of which were due to smoke inhalation.

Deliberate secondary fires were at an all-time low during 2012-13 with a 36% decrease compared with the previous year. The wet weather during the year undoubtedly contributed to the low numbers in addition to the Service's

continuous monitoring and analysis of arson which ensures very targeted intervention work in problem areas. Cheshire's arson conviction rate is much better than the national average which is testament to the proactive way that the Service tackles these issues and the close working relationship with the Police, including a detective paid for by the organisation.



COMMUNITY OUTCOMES KPIs				
Indicator	Actual	Year End Target	Year on Year Change	
Primary fires per 100,000 population	117.01	124.07	↓	Meeting target
Fatalities in primary fires per 100,000 population	0.4	0	↓	Failing against target by at least 10%
Injuries in primary fires per 100,000 population	5.06	4.56	↓	Meeting target
Deliberate fires per 10,000 population	14.36	20.96	↓	Meeting target
RTCs attended	364	327	↑	Failing against target by at least 10%
Customer satisfaction with the Service	83%	85%	↑	Meeting target

**Key:**  
■ Performance better than target by at least 10%  
■ Meeting target  
■ Within 10% of target  
■ Failing against target by at least 10%

## Prevention and Protection



Delivery against planned prevention and protection activities has been successful on the whole. Strong performance management during the year has ensured that targets have been met, and in some cases significantly exceeded.

An exception relates to Age UK Contact Assessments for older people – the take-up rate hasn't been as good as desired so during 2013-14 there will be a concerted effort by crews and advocates to improve this.

A new policy was launched in July 2012-13 to reduce the number of times the Service attends false alarm calls caused by problems with automatic alarm systems. An accompanying target was set for 2012-13 to reduce the number by 10% and a reduction of 15% was actually achieved by the end of the year through the implementation of the policy.

COMMUNITY PROTECTION KPIs				
Indicator	Actual	Year End Target	Year on Year Change	
Thematic Inspections Completed	1,859	1,848	↑	Meeting target
NDP fire safety audits completed	2,055	1,894	↑	Meeting target
Arson conviction rate	13%	6-8%	↑	Meeting target
Unwanted Fire Signals per 1,000 non-domestic premises	51.40	54.91	↓	Meeting target
Hits to business safety internet pages	5,594	None*	New KPI	

PREVENTION KPIs				
Indicator	Actual	Year End Target	Year on Year Change	
HSAs delivered to high risk dwellings	22,723	20,000	↓	Failing against target by at least 10%
Contact assessments acceptance rate	33%	40%	↑	Meeting target
Number of young people completing a youth programme	1,026	708	↑	Meeting target
Number of people reached through road safety events	40,820	21,844	↑	Meeting target

\* New baselines being established during 2012-13

## Response



The pass rate against the Cheshire Response Standards stood at 88% at the end of the year which was slightly below the target of 92%. For residential fires the Cheshire Standards were met on 98% of occasions.

The pass rate for road traffic collisions was somewhat lower at 73%. As published in IRMP 10, the Service has adopted a new 'blanket' 10 minute response time for life risk incidents from 2013-14.

A further reduction target was set for 2012-13 to continue to drive down the number of times the Service turns out in response to malicious calls.

Since 2007-08 there has been a 68% reduction in attendance at these incidents and this has been a result of rigorous call challenge and publicity regarding hoax calls.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE KPIs				
Indicator	Actual	Year End Target	Year on Year Change	
Cheshire Standards pass rate	88%	92%	↑	Meeting target
Average On-Call availability	66%	None*	↑	Meeting target
% Emergency calls handled within the standards	80%	85%	New KPI	
% Malicious calls not attended	52%	60%	↑	Meeting target

\* New baselines being established during 2012-13

## Resources



The resources KPIs focus on internal aspects of the organisation including a number relating to the Service's workforce. This segment shows healthy performance with all targets having been met.

'Working days lost to injury' is a Health and Safety measure. Overall, accidents and near misses in the workplace have reduced compared with 2011-12.

Any serious accidents must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

During 2012-13 the number of accidents reported to the HSE was eight, which is a continuation of the trend in recent years for low numbers of serious accidents.

RESOURCES KPIs				
Indicator	Actual	Year End Target	Year on Year Change	
Average days/shifts lost to sickness	5.43	5.5	↓	Meeting target
ICT core service availability	100%	96%	New KPI	
Working days lost to injury	106	150	↓	Meeting target
Core skills training completed	100%	100%	New KPI	
Overall staff satisfaction*	83%	65%	↑	Meeting target
Website visitors	325,966	166,610	↑	Meeting target

\* Measured every two years: last recorded in 2011-12



# Crews bring a major blaze under control



Firefighters rose to the challenge when a fire broke out at a Widnes recycling plant – a fire that was to burn for 32 days.

The incident, thought to be the longest incidents in the Service's history, took place on Johnson's Lane and involved thousands of tonnes of recycled plastics.

At the height of the blaze there were 15 fire engines at the scene battling to get the initial fire under control.

In the weeks that followed crews from Halton endured some challenging circumstances, as they ensured that the fire was dealt with in such a way that the damage to the surrounding environment was kept to a minimum.



## How clean is your grill?

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service launched its latest campaign - 'Dirty Grills Kill' - at Runcorn Fire Station Open Day. The campaign encourages people to clean their cookers to prevent a build up of oil causing a fire to break out.

Terry McDermott, Head of Service Delivery said: "Cooking remains the biggest cause of house fires in Halton. A major cause of this type of fire is unfortunately dirty grills.

"The problem occurs when a build up of fat and oil is left in the grill pan and heats up – basically creating a mini chip pan in your cooker. One spark can lead to it igniting and causing the type of blaze that at best will destroy your kitchen or even your home but at worst it could cost you your life or that of a loved one.

"Therefore we are urging people to join our campaign by making sure they keep their grills and cookers clean. I am certain that together we can drive down the numbers of these potentially devastating fires."

Between 2009-10 and 2012-13 there have been 861 cooking related house fires in Cheshire with 16% of incidents involving an injury or fatality.

Terry added: "We have a clear vision in Cheshire of seeing the number of fire deaths drop to zero but we need people's help so please get behind this campaign and start scrubbing those grills!"

# Keeping hearts healthy

The Service has opened a new facility at its Runcorn Fire Station to assist those with cardiac-related illnesses.

The Healthy Hearts Runcorn Gym has been unveiled at the Heath Road site. It was inspired by firefighters at the Station, who worked closely with the NHS to create the gym for use by Halton Hospital's Cardiac Rehabilitation Team.

Runcorn Fire Station Manager Sean Henshaw, said: "For many years now Runcorn Fire Station has been at the heart of the local community, with facilities such as its community garden and climbing wall. The Healthy Hearts Gym is a great new development that will be used as an outreach facility for delivering fitness sessions to patients who are rehabilitating following heart surgery or heart attacks."

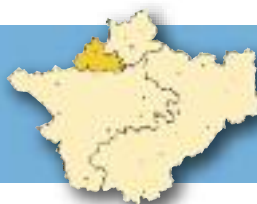


The old engine house has been completely refurbished to create a fully-equipped gym which has been designed in partnership with Warrington and Halton NHS Foundation Trust and is supported by the Local Area Forum.

Runcorn fire station staff will also be able to use the facility for training and fitness.



## Halton Unitary performance area profile



In the last three years, primary fires in Halton have reduced by 25%. These are fires that involve buildings and vehicles and include both accidental and deliberate incidents. In 2012-13 we saw the lowest number ever recorded. Although there was one fatality in a fire in Halton during 2012-13, this is the first since 2008-09. Injuries have reduced over the last three years and all of them in 2012-13 were categorised as 'slight' with no serious injuries.

Accidental dwelling fires are included in the primary fires category and these numbers are at an all-time low and have been relatively static over the last three years in Halton. Delivery of Home Safety Assessments continues to be focused on those households most at risk and this is backed up with publicity campaigns highlighting key safety messages, particularly around safety in the kitchen where around 50% of house fires start.

Deliberate fires are more of an issue in Halton than in the other areas covered by the Cheshire Fire Authority, however, there has been a dramatic reduction of 35% over the last three years. It is likely that the wet weather will have contributed to the reductions in 2012-13, however, there have been concerted efforts to tackle the problems in 'hotspot' areas in Halton, particularly focusing on small (secondary) deliberate fires associated with anti-social behaviour.

Key statistics	2010-11	11-12	12-13
Deliberate primary fires per 10,000 population	8.3	7.0	5.9
Deliberate secondary fires per 10,000	44.8	39.8	28.7
Primary fires per 100,000	169.5	166.8	127.3
Fatalities from primary fires per 100,000	0.0	0.0	0.8
Non-fatal casualties per 100,000	6.7	4.2	4.0

### Key contacts



Alex Waller  
Service Delivery  
Manager

Emma Coxon  
Locality Safety  
Manager

Liz Thompson  
Hub Administration  
Manager

Ian Kay  
Station Manager -  
Community Fire  
Protection

### Fire Authority Members



Stef Nelson

Rob Polhill

Phil Harris



■ Wholtime station

### Your local station

For more information about your local fire station, its opening times and any upcoming open days or other events please visit our website [www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk)

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