

Annual REPORT 2012-13

For the latest news visit: www.cheshirefire.gov.uk



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

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 – 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.



Investing in the future



Cheshire Fire Authority Members handed over the keys to a new fire engine to crews based at Warrington Fire Station. The vehicle is part of the Authority’s continued investment in firefighting equipment.

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”.

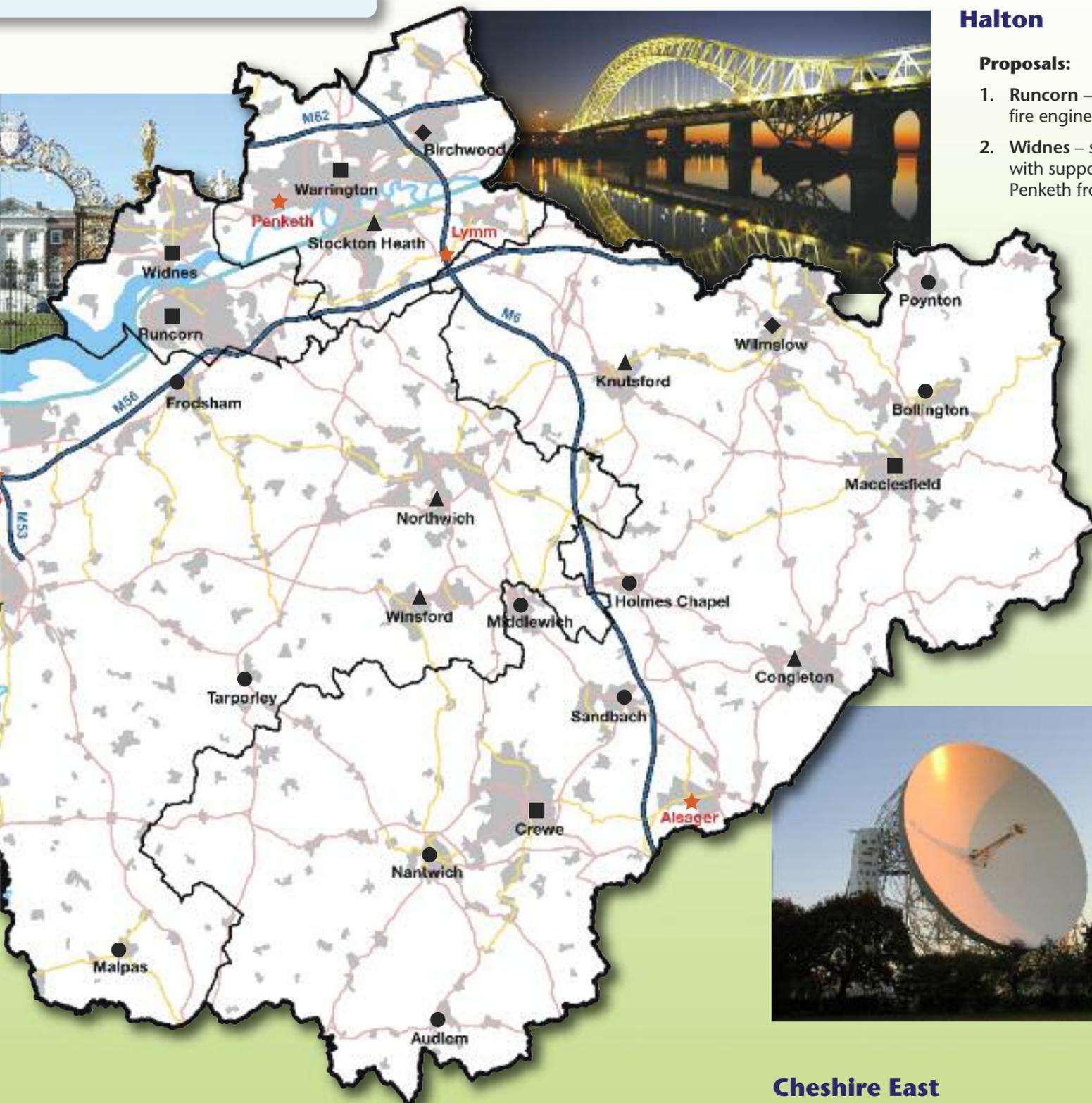
The secure countywide portal has been developed in partnership with Cheshire Police and means users can also register to receive updates from them and other partners.

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 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

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	
Net Cost of Service		37,056
Other income, expenditure and adjustments	7,476	
Amount to be met by Govt Grant and Local Taxation		44,532
Revenue Support Grant and Local Taxation	-19,664	
Council Tax	-25,064	
Net General Fund (Surplus)\Deficit		-196
Balance on General Fund brought forward	-6,545	
Balance on General Fund Carried Forward		-6,741

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	
Total Assets less Total Liabilities		-358,865
Financed by:		
Unusable reserves	380,770	
Earmarked Reserves	-15,164	
General Reserve	-6,741	
TOTAL NET WORTH		358,865

A full copy of the Statement of Accounts is available on our website - 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

Community litter picking day



Warrington firefighters organised a day of action around the Orford area of the town to help reduce deliberate fires.

Fire crews and members of the community safety team at Warrington joined forces with community wardens and young people in the area for a community litter pick around St Peter's Park.

The day was a roaring success with over 25 children turning up to help clean their local neighbourhood. Pallets and a variety of rubbish that could have been made into nuisance fires were removed from the area.

One of the aims was to unify the youth of Orford and perhaps stop potential fire-setters from causing fires in the area using discarded refuse.

The Service offered an incentive of a free cinema ticket, drink and popcorn to anyone who helped tidy their local area during the day. Certificates were also presented to those who took part.



Flooding causes issues



A spate of heavy rain and flooding in the Croft area of Warrington called on the skills and expertise of firefighters.

Early this year a spate of bad weather resulted in crews from Birchwood and Warrington being called to deal with a number of incidents in the area.

Watch Manager John Verry said: "This was a severe flood affecting 10 properties where people were advised to find alternative accommodation in anticipation of any further downpours. Crews assisted in humanitarian services and also reduced some of the flood by pumping water overflow to a nearby field."

One resident who lived in a nearby bungalow that had become involved in the flood was assisted by members of Warrington's Water Rescue Unit to a safe location.

Major store blaze

Firefighters rose to the challenge when a fire broke out at Boots the Chemists on Europa Boulevard, Warrington.

At the height of the blaze, which took place back in July 2012, there was more than 14 fire engines at the scene tackling what was an extremely challenging fire.



Terry McDermott, Head of Service Delivery, said: "The crews involved in this incident did a great job in the face of some difficult circumstances. There are a range of aerosols and chemicals involved which made it difficult for crews to enter the premises and tackle the fire at close quarters. Therefore we had to tackle the blaze using other techniques to both contain the fire and protect firefighters."

The Service spent several days at the site ensuring that the fire was out and the surrounding area was safe. The cause of the fire was believed to have been an electrical fault.



Warrington Unitary performance area profile



In the last three years, primary fires in Warrington have reduced by 29%. These are fires that involve property such as buildings and vehicles and include both accidental and deliberate incidents. In 2012-13 we saw the lowest number ever recorded. There have been no fire deaths in Warrington since 2010-11, and although there have been annual fluctuations in the volume of injuries recorded, the numbers are small.

Accidental dwelling fires are included in the primary fires category and these have reduced by 17% over the last three years. 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 in Warrington have reduced by nearly half in the last three years resulting in an all-time low. The most significant decrease has been in the number of small (secondary) deliberate fires which are often associated with anti-social behaviour. The wet weather during 2012-13 may have contributed to this, however, Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service's approach to identifying 'hotspot' areas has become more sophisticated and these problem areas are treated using a range of arson and youth engagement initiatives.

Key statistics	2010-11	11-12	12-13
Deliberate primary fires per 10,000 population	6.2	5.5	3.6
Deliberate secondary fires per 10,000	21.1	17.7	10.4
Primary fires per 100,000	166.6	148.8	118.4
Fatalities from primary fires per 100,000	0.5	0.0	0.0
Non-fatal casualties per 100,000	3.1	6.0	7.4

Key contacts



Alex Waller Service Delivery Manager
Lorraine Page Locality Safety Manager
Liz Thompson Hub Administration Manager
Ian Kay Station Manager - Community Fire Protection

Fire Authority Members



Mike Biggin **Hans Mundry**



John Joyce **Peter Carey** **Steve Wright**



- Wholtime station
- Day crewed station
- Day crewed 12hr shift

© Crown copyright and database rights 2013
 Ordnance Survey 1000240064



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

Call 01606 868700 if you know someone who wants to receive this report in another format