

Making Cheshire Safer

Proposals for 2014-15

Integrated Risk Management Plan 2014–15

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Headquarters



1

Introduction





Paul Hancock
Chief Fire Officer

Cllr. John Joyce
Fire Authority Chair

Cheshire Fire Authority is the public body which is accountable to the communities of Cheshire for ensuring they are protected by an effective fire and rescue service.

The Authority has a four year strategy – Planning for a Safer Cheshire - which reviews the key risks and challenges facing both local communities and the organisation itself and sets out the approach and direction it will take in response.

Annual action plans are produced which set out in more detail the projects and work scheduled in the following financial year. This approach fulfils the Fire Authority's statutory requirement to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) reflecting up to date risk information and outlining how resources will be used cost effectively to reduce the potential risks facing local communities.

Innovative community safety projects and the hard work of staff across the organisation have been key to ensuring that Cheshire is now a much safer place to live than it was a decade ago, with far less fires and injuries - see graphs opposite.

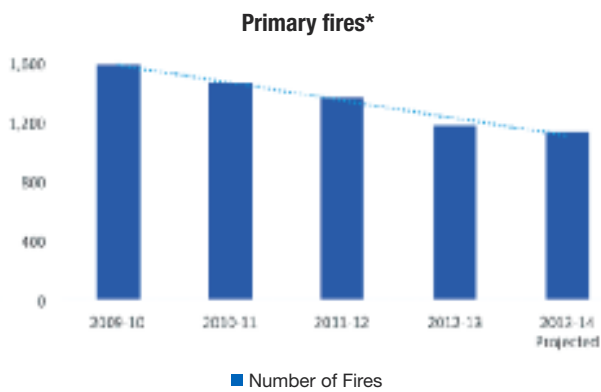
Continuing those improvements while tackling major cuts in funding represents a significant challenge to the Authority. We are confident, however, that the work which is already underway to fundamentally change how we provide emergency response services across Cheshire will help us to protect and improve the safety of local communities.

This programme, which follows extensive consultation in 2012-13, balances the expectations of local communities alongside risk and activity levels and the major cuts in its funding – expected to be over £8 million during the next four years. It involves building some new fire stations, keeping virtually the same number of fire engines but making significant changes in how many of them are staffed in the future.

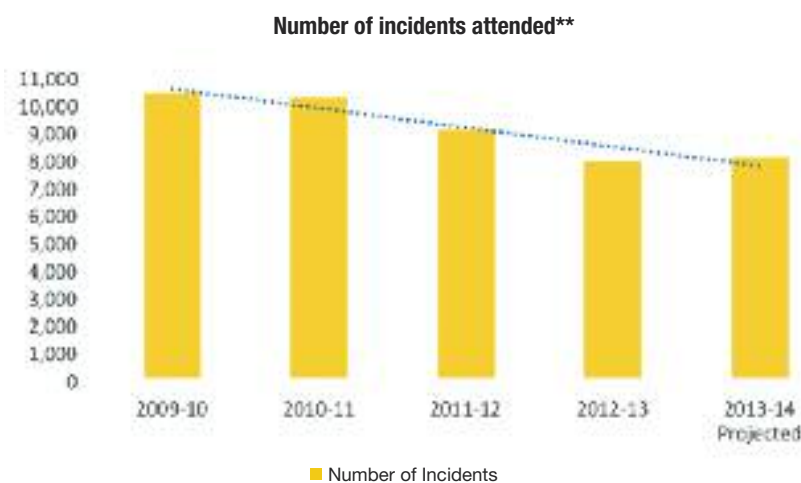
This annual action provides an update on the progress of the emergency response review programme to date and confirms the work scheduled for this financial year. It also sets out some additional proposals aimed at further improving the safety of residents and the efficiency of the organisation.

We would urge local communities and our partners to give their views and help us realise our vision of “a Cheshire where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fires or other emergencies.”

Safety trends - the following graphs show the trend of reductions in fires and incidents attended by the Service over the past five years.



* Those involving property such as homes, businesses, cars, injuries and incidents which are attended by at least five fire engines



** Excludes incidents attended outside the Service's area.





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Our approach to risk



Identifying key risks

The Fire Authority has a responsibility to provide an efficient and effective service that protects the communities and infrastructure of Cheshire.

Since 2003 each fire authority has been required to produce a local plan setting out how it would assess local risks to life and use its resources to protect local communities.

The National Framework for fire authorities was updated in 2012 to ensure that fire authorities engage with local communities, particularly around how they will deliver their prevention, protection, response and resilience activities. Its specific priorities are for fire and rescue authorities to:

- identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately
- work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service
- be accountable to communities for the service they provide.

To support this, Cheshire maintains a detailed understanding of the local, sub-regional, national and international factors that could have an impact on the delivery of its services in the future.

Each year a comprehensive and forward-looking analysis of these issues is produced, highlighting the most important political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal drivers for the Authority. In addition, the Service also carries out a detailed analysis of the incidents and emergencies it has attended to identify trends and issues to see how these could influence the organisation's future emergency response service.

The overall analysis is set out in the PESTELO document – (Political, Economic, Social, Technical, Environment, Legal and Operational review) - available on the Authority's website -



www.cheshirefire.gov.uk . As well as the Service's own data, the document also draws upon population and demographic information taken from the most recent 2011 Census, as well as a range of information obtained from partners.

National and local issues

In the next few years fire authorities, along with all local government bodies will continue to face changes to structures and funding and will have to adapt to what is almost certainly an ongoing programme of austerity measures.

While Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) nationally were offered some initial protection from the level of central Government funding cuts imposed on local councils, this is unlikely to be repeated in future spending reviews. By 2017-18 FRAs could have seen central grant funding reduced by approximately 40%.

This puts even more importance on Cheshire's ability to achieve efficiencies across the organisation, particularly those identified from the comprehensive review of its emergency response services during 2012-13. An updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) setting out the anticipated £8m million plus savings needed by 2017-18 is included in section 5.

There will also continue to be changes in how public services are delivered, including an increase in those provided jointly by local agencies, such as local councils, the police, fire and health bodies. Many of these initiatives have emerged through community budget

pilots, including the Altogether Better programme in Cheshire West and Chester, in which Cheshire Fire Authority plays a leading role.



Many local partners are also undergoing significant change or have recently re-structured. The introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners and changes to health structures will present challenges and opportunities for the Authority, including existing arrangements for sharing data. Equally, there have been a number of recent major reports questioning how fire authorities and other emergency services should be delivered and managed in the future. Options involving transforming services and better collaboration between individual fire and rescue services and other blue light services have been backed by the Government making specific funds available for work in these areas.

The Fire Authority intends to influence and comment on these national debates to ensure any changes do not compromise the provision of an effective fire and rescue service for communities across Cheshire.

New housing developments

According to unitary authority plans there will be approximately 61,000 new dwellings in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington by 2030.

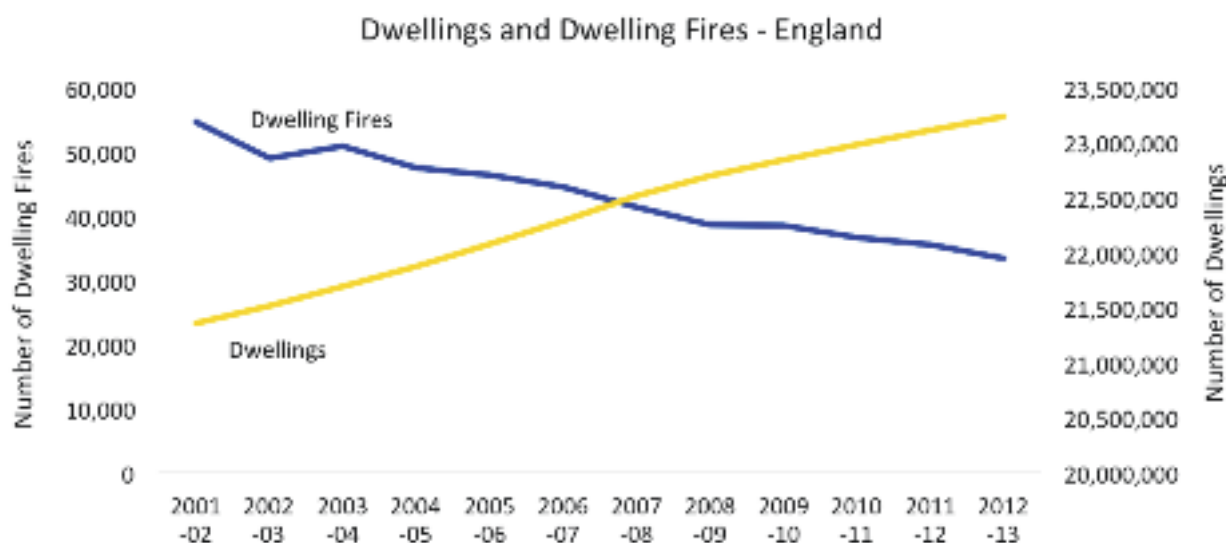
With an increase in the number of dwellings there might be an expectation that dwelling fires will also increase but as the following graph shows, though the number of dwellings has steadily grown since 2001, dwelling fires have reduced in England.

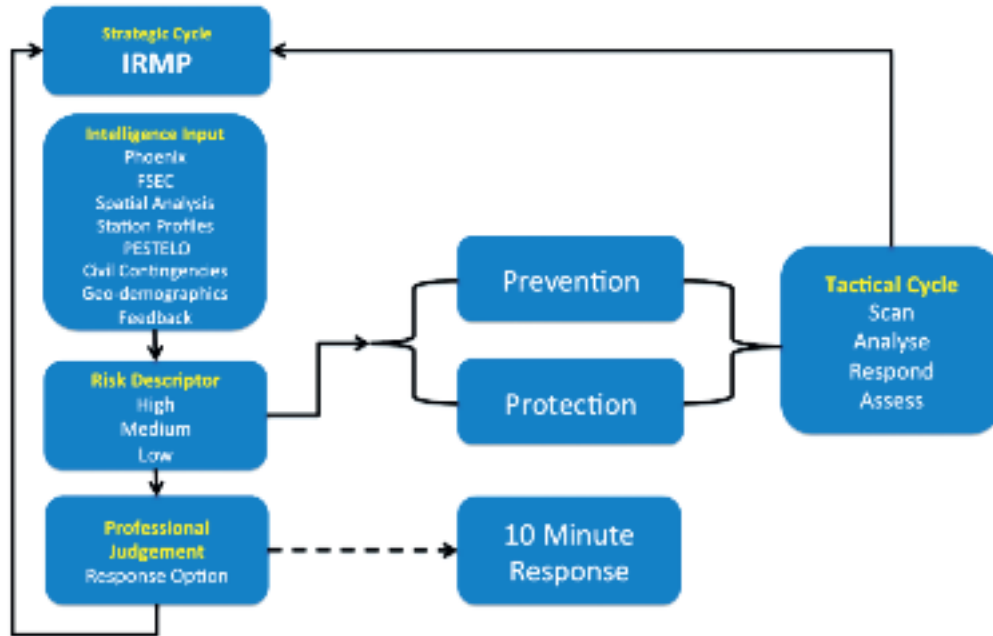
From a geo-demographic perspective new homes also tend to have the lowest rate of fires (0.7 per 1,000 per year) as more fires occur in areas of high density social housing (3.3 per 1,000 per year). (Source: DCLG fire statistics)

Despite the limited potential increase in house fires as a result of increased new building across Cheshire, the Authority will continue to review in detail the potential impact on any of its plans to change its emergency response service in the future.

Targeting those most at risk

The Community Risk Management (CRM) model is the Service’s way of monitoring risk levels so that it can effectively target its resources in the most appropriate areas.





The CRM model (above) illustrates how data and information is used to support the delivery of the organisation’s fire prevention, community protection and emergency response activity.

The strategic cycle, delivered annually through the Authority’s Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), prioritises key issues identified through a variety of internal and external intelligence including:

- specialist modelling software
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- demographic data
- historical fire and rescue incident information and trends.

This allows the Service to focus its prevention and protection activities where they will have most impact. It also means emergency response options can be reviewed and then considered by the Service Management Team and the Fire Authority.

The tactical cycle highlighted in the model involves the monitoring of intelligence and performance at least quarterly. This checks that Service activity is continuing to be delivered according to risk and ensures prompt and targeted community safety action can be used to address specific issues.

This use of intelligence informs a range of different Service activities such as home safety assessments, school visits/youth engagement, arson reduction and road safety initiatives and helps staff to understand who, where and when to target for the best results.

The risk analysis processes and methodologies themselves are also reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain fit for purpose and reflect good practice.



Response standards

The CRM model also highlights the new performance indicator which the Authority introduced at the beginning of the 2013-14 financial year following extensive public consultation. This is a blanket 10 minute response standard to all life-risk incidents (dwelling fires and road traffic collisions) on 80% of occasions.

Use of the CRM model ensures that areas with the longest response times are prioritised for prevention and protection activity.

Targeting our Community Safety work

The Fire Authority is committed to undertaking a minimum of 25,000 targeted Home Safety Assessments (HSAs) in 2014-15 in the most vulnerable households. This is based upon a targeting methodology and enhanced data obtained through partner agencies.

This approach centres on enriching our existing data on vulnerable people, with data that the NHS and local authorities share with the Authority, by including;

- Personal risk,
- Lone persons risk,
- Geo-demographic risk and
- Operational response times.

Research shows that personal fire-risk increases with age and the methodology uses weightings to ensure that these factors are balanced.

The Authority has access to further intelligence which helps identify other groups who might also fall into the high risk category. This data comes from sources such as local authority social care and means those with the overall highest risk score can be prioritised for an HSA.

Low risk households are targeted through other routes, such as local and national campaigns as well as online approaches through the Authority's website – www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/5mins.

The Authority has also identified that a significant proportion of house fires continue to be cooking-related and this will be a key theme in this year's prevention campaigns.

The Service has a strong track record of successful programmes with young people. Many of these are aimed at diverting young people away from getting involved in anti-social behaviour, making hoax calls and arson. Other projects, such as fire cadets develop personal and team skills, with a team from Cheshire having just built a fifth school in Ghana as part of an education charity project.



Enforcing Fire Safety work

The Authority also uses the same risk based and intelligence-led approach to the regulation of businesses, commercial and other non-domestic premises. This is achieved through a business safety team, routine enforcement, fire investigation and arson reduction.

The Service also works closely with key partners to protect communities and businesses from fire. These include Housing Associations, HM Prison Service, the Police, Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership, United Kingdom Border Agency, Care Quality Commission and others.

Premises with a history of good fire safety practices benefit from extended periods between audits, such as every three years. Those with poor management standards receive closer attention, such as annual checks.

The Authority's focus is always on helping businesses to fulfil their fire safety responsibilities in the first instance. Its approach of having a dedicated business outreach safety team which reaches out to engage with local firms was cited as best practice in a recent Review of Enforcement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 carried out by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

If firms fail to respond to issues or concerns which have been raised with them, then the Service will resort to court action. Several prosecutions have already resulted in fines running into many thousands of pounds.



In 2012 a pilot scheme for fire authorities was launched to consider how businesses operating from different sites across the country could partner with a single local fire authority to ensure there was consistency in fire safety auditing and enforcement. Cheshire is supporting the approach – called the primary authority scheme – which would see fire authorities providing assured advice for regional or national businesses, outside their own area.

Response and resilience

The National Framework also requires each fire and rescue authority to identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature.



The Fire Authority aims to achieve this through collaborative arrangements with neighbouring fire and rescue services and national agencies, with other local emergency responders and through Cheshire Resilience – the local body set up to coordinate the plans and activities of emergency responders.

The Framework also requires the Authority to produce an annual statement of assurance to formally demonstrate how it is meeting its statutory responsibilities. The Authority is committed to open and transparent communication and intends to use its website – www.cheshirefire.gov.uk – as a key way of providing residents and partners with the information they need to scrutinise the effectiveness of its financial, governance and operational arrangements.



Projects and proposals



The previous section highlighted some of the key risks, challenges and issues facing the Fire Authority over the coming months and years. This section sets out how the organisation is already responding to those issues as well as outlining future proposals for ensuring communities across Cheshire can continue to be protected by an effective fire and rescue service.

The Authority's projects and proposals are presented under the following three headings:

- Developing the organisation
- Protecting local communities
- Responding to emergencies.

Developing the organisation

The Authority is committed to continuous improvement and actively looks for opportunities to challenge and compare its performance with others. It was one of the first in the country to submit itself to the new system for assessing the effectiveness of local fire and rescue services.

The Operational Assessment and Peer Review involved a four day visit by an independent six-strong team made up of senior representatives from other fire and rescue services and local councils.

They analysed the organisation's past performance and future plans and challenged its effectiveness during extensive interviews with staff, Fire Authority Members and key partners. Their report praised the way in which the Service operates, highlighted areas of best practice and specified a number of issues and challenges which needed to be addressed.

The challenges included:

- Ensuring a robust consultation over the Authority's proposed changes to its emergency response services and providing a clear vision for the future

- Maintaining a detailed understanding of the finances involved in the emergency response review and ensuring the organisation has sufficient staff with the right skills to deliver it
- Ensuring the Authority understands and is involved in the widespread changes affecting its key partners including health and the election of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Managing the transition to the North West Fire Control centre and ensuring all staff are kept informed
- Co-ordinating its value for money reviews and examining all models of service delivery, including out-sourcing, shared services and commissioning others.

The Service has produced an action plan with a detailed response to each of the issues which is scrutinised by Fire Authority Members. Fundamental to addressing the challenges identified by the Peer Review team was the completion of the Authority's biggest ever consultation on its future plans.

The 12-week consultation was accredited by the national Consultation Institute as satisfying its best practice criteria and ensured the Authority could have a high degree of confidence in the results.



■ *iESE Chief Executive Dr Andrew Lerner presents Fire Authority Chair Cllr John Joyce with the project of the year award.*

The Authority also uses external accreditation and awards programmes to compare its performance and was acclaimed as Fire and Rescue Service of the Year in 2011-12 as well as achieving Excellence in the national Equality and Diversity Framework.

In 2013 the Service won:

- the Improvement and Efficiency (iESE) Fire and Rescue Project of the Year award which recognises the transformation in local public services from councils, police, fire authorities and their private and third sector partners
- the Volunteer Programme of the Year at the national Social Impact Awards 2013 which celebrate and reward excellence in charities, not-for-profit, social enterprise, public and private sector organisations who have made a 'Big Difference' in their communities.

With major questions being raised over how fire and rescue services could be delivered and managed in the future, the Authority is

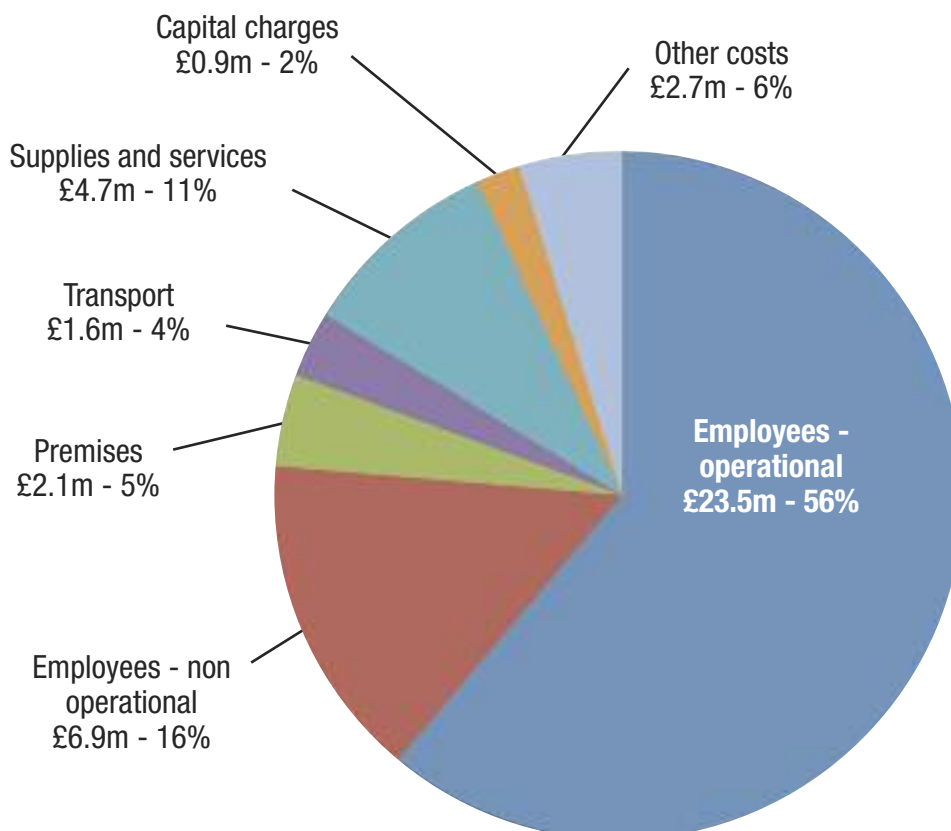
ensuring it is able to influence and comment on the various debates. The Service's senior officers hold key posts in the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), while senior Fire Authority Members sit on the Local Government Association's national Fire Services Management Committee.

Value for money

The chart below shows a headline breakdown of the Service's £42.7 million budget for the current 2014-15 financial year and highlights that over three-quarters goes on staff costs, with most of that on firefighters and fire officers. It is clear that the bulk of the estimated £8 million savings needed over the next four years will inevitably have to come by reducing staff costs.

The outcomes of the Emergency Response Review agreed by the Fire Authority in 2013 have resulted in a programme of change aimed at ensuring the most efficient and cost-effective use of its fire stations, fire engines and staffing systems in the future. These will make

Budget 2014-15 (£42.7m)



a significant contribution to the savings needed and an update on the projects planned for 2014-15 is set out in the 'Responding to Emergencies' section.

To ensure all other areas of the organisation are working efficiently and in line with the Service's future needs there has been a comprehensive three-year programme of value for money reviews, scheduled for completion in 2014. These will have covered all non-operational departments in the organisation and have involved:

- challenging why and how a service is being provided
- comparing performance with others
- consulting with key stakeholders
- examining fair competition to secure efficient and effective services.

While the reviews did not have targets to save specific amounts of money or cut a certain number of jobs, efficiencies totalling nearly £1 million will have been achieved, together with a reduction in post numbers and changes in responsibilities.

As a major local employer the Service recognises its responsibilities for developing the skills of young people and in 2014-15 it intends to run a pilot apprentice scheme.

The Service intends to continue scrutinising non-operational areas of the Service for further efficiencies in 2014-15 by carrying out a fundamental review of its key service-wide systems such as those for finance and HR. It will evaluate opportunities to make efficiencies by changing existing systems or working in collaboration with others. Options to improve the efficiency of its Site Specific Risk Information programme will also be explored.

This joint working could involve collaborating with other public authorities in Cheshire or with other fire and rescue services in the North West following the launch of the new joint control centre in Warrington, scheduled for April 2014.

Other joint working has seen Poynton Community Fire Station expanded to also



provide a base for both police and ambulance staff. It is intended to use the working arrangements agreed here as the basis for providing similar joint facilities at other fire stations across Cheshire.

The Service is also continuing to play an active role in the Cheshire West and Chester "Altogether Better" community budget programme aimed at improving the way local public services are provided. Staff have been seconded to the project team and the Service will be ensuring that the impact of its work in this and other similar potential joint projects can be fully assessed.

Further value for money work has seen the establishment of an income generation working group to identify opportunities for the organisation to bring in additional money, provided these do not affect its ability to deliver its core services or damage its brand and reputation.

As part of its commitment to the Environment, the Authority is ensuring energy efficiency measures are a key feature in its planned new fire stations. It is also revising its carbon reduction target and now aims to achieve a 40% reduction by 2020 (compared to its 2009-10 consumption.)

Protecting local communities

The number of house fires continued to fall during 2012-13 and the figure of 429 for the whole of Cheshire is the lowest ever recorded.

Despite this, the Service recognises that there still needs to be a strong focus on safety work in the future, particularly with the increased risk from the rising older population.

Its Home Safety Assessments (HSAs) - which give householders vital safety advice and free smoke alarms if needed – are now targeted specifically at those most at risk. The Service is committed to undertaking a minimum of 25,000 HSAs in 2014-15 in the most vulnerable households, based on the targeting methodology outlined in the previous section.

A key focus for 2014-15 will be to maintain and improve the access we have to data which will help us to identify more quickly and easily those at risk. That has meant developing new agreements with health partners following the major changes in their structures and responsibilities.

Nationally Cheshire will continue to play a leading role in negotiations with the Government to gain access to other key data sources such as from the Department of Work and Pensions.

Further specific projects in this area have seen a successful collaboration with Age UK Cheshire to employ a specialist outreach worker to visit people affected by dementia. In partnership with local health services, visits are made to the homes of dementia sufferers and a range of practical fire and other safety advice and support provided.

For those families and households at lower risk, the Service has set up an online self assessment system - www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/5mins. This provides key safety messages and allows people to test out how at risk they are – any responses above a certain level trigger an automatic HSA visit.

The Service knows, however, that some people would prefer to have a visit by fire safety professionals who would also fit their smoke alarms – even if they had to pay. The Service will consider a business case during 2014-15 on running a paid-for HSA programme for low risk households.

As part of its commitment to partnership working, the Service is acting as the lead agency for a Government-funded sub-regional community safety programme. The programme involves agencies working together on five projects to improve the safety of residents across Cheshire.



Campaigns

While the Fire Authority is confident it can continue to reduce the risks facing local communities, it also believes that changes in legislation are key to making the next fundamental improvements in fire safety. In support of this it is running two high profile campaigns:

- Smoke alarms – pressing the Government to make it a legal requirement for private landlords to fit long life, linked smoke alarms in all their properties
- Sprinklers - supporting the national fire and rescue service bid to make the fitting of sprinkler systems a requirement in all domestic new buildings in England.

As a result of campaigning by the Service and others, the new Energy Bill includes the option for the Government to bring in the necessary smoke alarm legislation. The Authority will be providing evidence aimed at convincing the Government to enact the powers.

In support of the smoke alarm campaign it will also be considering a local campaign to recognise housing landlords in Cheshire who make a specific commitment to fire safety.

On sprinklers, the Authority has earmarked £160,000 to work with local housing associations on retro-fitting systems into at least one block of flats in each of the four local council areas. Based on the costs of similar work elsewhere, the money is enough to fund 50% of the costs of installing sprinklers in at least four high rise tower blocks with around 60 flats in each.



In addition, each of the four local authorities are being urged to use their influence and powers to press for sprinklers to be considered locally and nationally.

Other campaigns by the Service will see work to highlight the risks of kitchen fires – which continue to be the cause of over 50% of all house fires in Cheshire.

The 'Dirty Grills Kill' campaign highlights the problems caused by a build up of fat in cookers, while a £5,000 grant from the Electrical Safety Council is being put towards a new outreach vehicle to promote wider kitchen safety messages.



Work with young people

The Service continues to have success in being commissioned to deliver some of its youth engagement projects on behalf of partners. This has seen additional 'Primary Respect' courses for pupils in years 5 and 6 being run and there are plans to build on this in 2014-15.

Extra Prince's Trust programmes for older teenagers and above have also been running across Cheshire, with the 20th anniversary of the Service's delivery of the courses celebrated at a special event with key partners in June 2013.

Other work with young people has seen the Service commissioned by Cheshire East Council to deliver road safety education on its behalf as



part of a four year programme which also includes detailed evaluation of its impact.

The Authority has recently approved a business case to establish Cheshire's own dedicated Safety Centre. This would provide a highly interactive opportunity for visitors to learn about a whole range of safety issues in one place.

Similar centres operate in other areas of the country and cover issues ranging from road, home and fire safety to railways, building sites, water and even online issues.

The plans are to incorporate the Safety Centre as part of a new operational fire station and specialist training facility near Lymm. Further discussions are being held with partners over the development and running costs of the project.

False alarms

Automatic fire alarm systems (AFAs) can be an important way of alerting staff and visitors to businesses and other large premises about potential fires and the need to evacuate. Unfortunately, they can often result in false alarms, with up to 40% of all incidents attended by some fire crews in Cheshire down to problems with AFAs.

In July 2012 the Service changed the way it handles these calls in a bid to halve the number of false alarms firefighters have to deal with each year. The change involved the Service's control operators trying to get confirmation from the premises or the alarm companies that there is a genuine emergency before sending any fire crews.

If they can't get confirmation either way, one fire engine – instead of the previous two or more – is sent under blue lights to investigate. Calls from premises where there could be people sleeping, such as homes, hospitals, care homes, hotels, hostels and halls of residence are not challenged.

The new policy helped to achieve a 15% reduction in the number of false alarms attended during 2012-13. Despite this, however, the Service still sent crews to 2,547 AFA calls – nearly a third of all incidents attended – with 98.7% of those false alarms.

The Service has reviewed the policy and introduced a further change which means that between 9am to 5pm crews will not be sent to AFAs from commercial premises unless there is a follow-up phone call to confirm there is a fire. Premises such as hospitals, care homes and hotels continue to be exempt from the policy.

Responding to emergencies

Implementing the outcomes of the Authority's fundamental review of its emergency response services will clearly be the organisation's main priority in 2014-15 and the following financial years.

The programme of building new stations and introducing new shift systems is being kept under regular review and any changes to the draft timetable will be communicated to local communities, partners and staff. In addition, the proposals will continue to be scrutinised through the Authority's annual risk management process to ensure they still meet its objectives, financial challenges and risk profile.

Initial work on the emergency response programme has concentrated on identifying and securing land for the new fire stations planned for Alsager, Penketh, Lymm and near the M53 / M56 interchange. The potential for a fifth new fire station in Neston is under review.

New fire stations

The Authority has made good progress in securing three of the four sites currently required for new fire stations.

As a result, the draft timetable on page 22 has been updated to reflect the current position on both acquiring the sites and obtaining planning permission.

The most significant change is for Penketh which is now showing completion of the new station in the 2015-16 financial year. The linked plan to remove the second fire engine from Widnes Community Fire Station has also been aligned with the new timescale.

The timetable will continue to need updating to reflect changes in planning and other issues outside the organisation's control. The Authority will also need to review how any approaches it receives from developers for its existing stations could impact on its overall emergency response programme.

Following a review, the Service has decided that an option to have a fire station at Cheshire East Council's former Redsands Children Centre in Willaston, Nantwich would not meet its current operational requirements.



Crewing and shift systems

Other preparation work in support of the emergency response programme has seen the completion of detailed task analysis into firefighter roles and responsibilities at incidents. This has highlighted a number of changes in both equipment and procedures which have been carried out to ensure safe systems of work for when the Service formally changes to operating with four firefighters on fire engines at all whole-time fire stations in the future.

In addition, a series of working groups involving firefighters and trade union representatives have completed a detailed review of potential future shift systems. The final proposals will be confirmed for implementation in 2015.

A further review of the number of flexi duty officer posts will be undertaken this year.

On-call recruitment

One of the key outcomes from the emergency response review programme was the Fire Authority's decision to make greater use of part time or 'on-call' firefighter posts. This follows the continuing reduction in the number of incidents attended by the Service and the need to better match emergency response resources to risk and activity levels.

So far successful on-call recruitment campaigns have already been carried out in 2013 in Runcorn and Macclesfield, with further recruitment drives planned for Alsager and Penketh in 2014.

With on-call staff making up a larger proportion of the workforce in the future, there will be a need for regular recruitment to maintain the numbers required. To support this, options are currently being explored to set up a mobile recruitment centre which would allow the Service to go out into local communities and give people the chance to try out some of the physical selection tests used as part of the assessment process.

Options to introduce a salary scheme for on-call firefighters have been explored and no



further action is currently planned, however, the issue will be kept under review.

Review of emergency vehicles

The Service has recently implemented the outcomes of a review into the range of specialist vehicles and appliances it uses. This has involved removing some vehicles such as hazardous materials units which were hardly used and making more use of containers or 'pods' to store specialist equipment and supplies so these can be carried easily on flat bed lorries.

In addition, a major refurbishment of an existing vehicle has been completed to create a dedicated mobile incident command unit which can be used at major incidents. This has been fitted out with a range of hi-tech equipment to help in planning, managing and communicating during large-scale fires or other emergencies.

The Service has also been carrying out research into the potential of buying specialist vehicles which combine a traditional fire engine with an extendable hydraulic platform so fire crews can work at height. It has now been decided,

however, that these would not be an effective solution once the planned changes to stations and crewing systems in Cheshire are fully implemented. Accordingly a further review of Hydraulic Platforms will be carried out this year.

It has also been agreed to carry out a detailed review in to how the Service's fleet of fire engines should be bought, specified and maintained in the future. A staff working group will support the organisation's Fleet Services Manager in carrying out the review and reporting back to the Fire Authority.



North West Fire Control

Since June 2012 Cheshire has been handling all 999 calls for Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service and mobilising their fire engines and officers to emergencies. This has worked effectively and some of the lessons learned have been used to help the implementation of the North West Fire Control Centre at Lingley Mere, Warrington - scheduled to become fully operational early in 2014-15.



The project is supported by four out of the five fire authorities in the North West – Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Lancashire – and has seen staff from all of the Services working closely together on a wide range of tasks in preparation for the go live date.

The new centre will be managed by a dedicated local authority company, with a board of directors comprising two Members from each Fire Authority.

The business case for the project outlined how the new Centre will deliver a more effective, efficient and resilient system than current arrangements. In addition, it is recognised that once the Centre is fully operational, it will pave the way for decisions about the potential for further joint working in both operational and support service areas.



Projects and proposals 2014-15 - summary

Developing the organisation

- Ensure the Authority participates and influences national debates over the future delivery and management of emergency services
- Finalise the outcomes of all value for money reviews, carry out a fundamental review of key service-wide systems and evaluate options for future collaboration following the launch of the North West Fire Control
- Launch a pilot apprentice scheme for the Service



Protecting local communities

- Complete new data sharing agreements with local health partners and take a lead role in negotiations with the Government over access to national data sources
- Review a business case to provide a paid-for Home Safety Assessment programme for low risk households
- Implement the first phase of the project to part fund the retro-fitting of sprinklers in some high rise blocks of flats across the four unitary council areas
- Work with partners to establish Cheshire's own dedicated Safety Centre at the new fire station planned for Lymm
- Campaign for the Government to enact the provisions in the Energy Bill to require private landlords to fit smoke and/or carbon monoxide alarms in all properties



Responding to emergencies

- Continue to implement the Authority's emergency response programme including new crewing arrangements for the second fire engine at Runcorn, a new shift system at Macclesfield and the launch of on-call recruitment at Alsager, Congleton, Knutsford, Northwich, Penketh, Stockton Heath and Winsford
- Carry out a detailed review in to how the Service's fleet of fire engines should be bought, specified and maintained in the future.
- Work to identify further opportunities to share Service premises with partner organisations



Draft Timetable

The Fire Authority has set out the draft timetable below for the implementation of the emergency response programme. It reflects current anticipated activity over the next three financial years. Given the scale and complexity of the projects, the programme is being reviewed and updated annually to reflect local consultation and land development issues.

2014–2015

1. Start recruiting for On-call staff at Penketh and Alsager
2. Introduce new crewing arrangements for the second fire engine at Runcorn
3. Introduce new shift system at Macclesfield
4. Start riding four firefighters across all stations
5. Start recruiting for On-call staff at Congleton, Knutsford, Northwich, Stockton Heath and Winsford

2015–2016

1. New On-call fire station at Alsager – “go live”
2. New fire station at Penketh – “go live” using the second fire engine from Warrington
3. Remove the second fire engine from Widnes
4. New fire station at Lymm – “go live”
5. Transfer Technical Rescue Unit from Knutsford to Lymm and Incident Response Unit from Winsford to Lymm
6. Transfer the hydraulic platform from Stockton Heath to Warrington
7. Introduce On-call model for Stockton Heath and Knutsford
8. Implement new crewing arrangements at Congleton, Winsford and Northwich
9. Start recruiting for On-call staff at Crewe and Ellesmere Port
10. New fire station at M53/M56 interchange – “go live” using the second fire engine from Chester. Transfer the Foam and Environmental Protection Units at Ellesmere Port, the Incident Response Unit from Chester and the High Volume Pump from Congleton to the new station

2016–2017

1. Introduce new crewing arrangement for second fire engine at Crewe
2. Introduce new crewing arrangement for second fire engine at Ellesmere Port or move it to a new fire station at Neston



4 Consultation and engagement



Consultation and engagement

In 2012 the Authority carried out its most comprehensive consultation to date in recognition of the major changes set out in its emergency response review proposals. The three month consultation was overseen by the Consultation Institute and Cheshire subsequently became the first fire and rescue service in the country to be successfully accredited through its Compliance Assessment scheme.

The outcomes from the consultation were used by the Authority in confirming which of the options it intended to pursue and this action plan sets out current progress and an updated four year timetable.

The plan also contains a number of new proposals for developing the organisation, protecting local communities and responding to emergencies. While these are not as far reaching as those set out in last year's plan, the Authority remains committed to ensuring residents, businesses, partners and staff have the opportunity to give their views.

As a result, it ran a formal 12 week consultation and engagement programme from September 23 to December 16, 2013. The outcomes were included in a full consultation report presented at the Fire Authority's meeting on February 12, 2014 when Members confirmed the organisation's budget for 2014-15. Copies of the consultation report are on the Service's website – www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

The programme involved face to face briefings and presentations for key stakeholders, as well as a series of community consultation roadshows for residents and senior management roadshows for staff. There were also opportunities to comment and feedback through the Service's website, Intranet and social media channels.

In addition to this general consultation on its future plans, the Service also completed specific local consultation in those areas where it is planning to build new fire stations such as



Alsager and Penketh. These sessions provided residents and local partners with the chance to give feedback on the potential facilities and layout of the station - the results are included in the full consultation report.

The contact details for further information are as follows:

e-mail: consultation@cheshirefire.gov.uk

tel. 01606 868408

post: Consultation and
Engagement Officer
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service,
Sadler Road,
Winsford,
Cheshire
CW7 2FQ



5

Financial update



Medium Term Financial Plan 2013–14 to 2017–18

	2013-14 £000	2014-15 £000	2015-16 £000	2016-17 £000	2017-18 £000
Base Budget pre additions and savings	44,729	43,623	42,690	41,392	40,425
Additions:					
Revenue Growth	503	174	1,494	1,060	500
Capital Financing Charges	0	0	0	0	60
Inflation (pay 1.5%, non pay 2%)	702	698	680	670	668
Council Tax Freeze grant from CLG	751	0	0	0	0
Sections 31 grants Business Rates	0	(213)	213	0	0
Allocation of Council Tax (second homes)	1	1	1	1	1
Other savings	(1,694)	(2,156)	(2,864)	(1,876)	(1,253)
IRMP reserve movement	231	563	(822)	(822)	(822)
Repayment of loans	(1,600)	0	0	0	0
Revised Total Budget Requirement	43,623	42,690	41,392	40,425	39,579
Base Funding b\ fwd					
Council Tax	25,058	23,011	23,655	24,126	24,606
Settlement Funding Assessment	19,665	20,706	19,068	17,466	16,069
Provision for non collection	0	(100)	(150)	(200)	(250)
Total Base Funding	44,723	43,617	42,513	41,392	40,425
Add Increases\ (Decreases) in Funding:					
Council Tax					
Increase in council tax (1.99%)	449	455	471	480	490
Increase / reduction in taxbase	(2,496)	189	0	0	0
Surplus / deficit on collection fund	6	117	0	0	0
Provision for non collection	(100)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Settlement Funding Assessment	1,041	(1,638)	(1,602)	(1,397)	(1,286)
Total movement in funding	(1,100)	(927)	(1,181)	(967)	(846)
Total Available Funding	43,623	42,690	41,392	40,425	39,579
Total savings required 2014-15 to 2017-18					(8,149)

As part of its budget management the Fire Authority produces a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which looks four years ahead. This financial overview is regularly updated and uses research and external intelligence to make a number of informed assumptions about future pay, inflation, Government grants and Council Tax levels.

By April 2014 the Authority will have made efficiency savings of nearly £4.5 million over the previous three financial years to offset changes and reductions in Government funding. Three quarters of those savings have come from reductions in corporate budgets and support service departments.

This plan has already indicated that fire and rescue services can expect ongoing reductions in their central funding for some years and certainly after the 2015 general election.

The current MTFP on the opposite page is based on expectations that future reductions in the Authority's central funding will continue at the level experienced over the last few years. Other assumptions include:

- a 1.99% annual increase in the Authority's Council Tax precept in future years
- a 1.5% annual increase in staff pay
- a 2% allowance each year for inflation.

The plan does not include any revenue savings from the departmental value for money reviews due for completion in 2014, however, it is clear that cuts averaging £2 million a year will need to be made.

The emergency response plans already agreed by the Fire Authority will deliver a significant amount of those savings, however, further efficiencies will need to be identified over the next four financial years to balance the budget.

The building of four - potentially five - new fire stations is a key part of the emergency response plans but that money will come from the Authority's capital spending programme, not its day to day revenue budget.

The Authority has been helped after it was awarded a one-off £4.5 million capital grant from the Government towards the programme after outlining how it would help generate future efficiencies. Combined with its existing capital grant, it means the Authority has £6.6 million available towards the building programme, limiting the need to take out any loans.

The Authority believes that the expectations in the MTFP together with the proposals set out in this annual action plan will enable it to deliver its objectives of continuing to protect the public while aiming to avoid compulsory redundancies of firefighters.



6

Performance management



Strategic monitoring of the organisation's performance is carried out by the Fire Authority, including quarterly reports to the Performance and Overview Committee. More detailed scrutiny is carried out by an internal performance management group and through the Service's unitary council performance groups which involve both local councillors and staff.

A mixture of nationally accepted fire and rescue service performance indicators together with local targets are used to track progress and monitor trends. Dedicated staff ensure risk, planning and performance data is collated, checked, interpreted, reported and scrutinised effectively.

Summary performance 2013-14

This section provides the latest information on some of the headline indicators used by the Authority to monitor progress in achieving its vision of 'a Cheshire where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fires or other emergencies.'

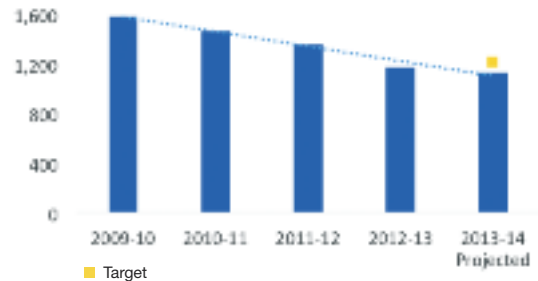
Annual and longer term targets are set and a key principle of our approach is aiming for continuous improvement to achieve the best outcomes for our communities. The trend analysis shown here is based on five years' worth of data and illustrates the impact over time of our efforts to drive down the numbers of fires, deaths and injuries.

As at 28th February 2014, there had been three fatalities recorded in fires, two of which were in house fires. While this is a decrease compared to the previous four years, annual changes are volatile given the low numbers relative to a population of over one million. Similarly, fire-related injuries are consistently below 60 each year, which means that changes in reporting definitions and a single incident with several people injured can skew the annual figure.

In the following information and graphs the figures for 2013-14 are projected from data as at 28th February 2014. It is clear that the Service is maintaining the overall downward trend in the number of fire incidents. As numbers reduce, continuing that improvement becomes even more challenging and we need to be increasingly

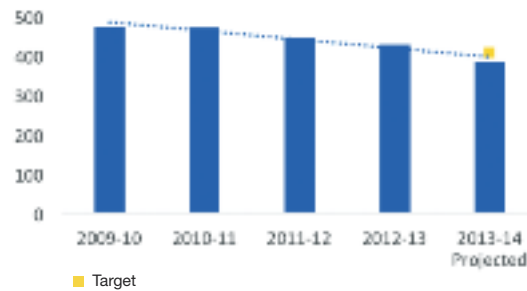
sophisticated in both our approach to targeting our safety work with communities and businesses, as well as setting realistic performance goals.

Primary fires



Recorded primary fires - those involving property such as homes, businesses, cars, injuries and incidents attended by at least five fire engines - are projected to end this year 29% lower than five years ago.

Accidental house fires



Accidental fires in the home are projected to record a 19% decrease compared to 2009-10 figures. The Service continues to exceed the target to deliver a minimum of 20,000 Home Safety Assessments to high risk households and targets its safety messages toward cooking safety, as over 40% of these incidents have been cooking-related so far this year.

Arson

Due to above average rainfall last year and targeted community engagement, 2012-13 recorded the smallest volume of deliberate fires ever in Cheshire and nationally. As such, a slight increase was understandably projected for 2013-14. Even so, incident volumes as a whole are projected to report a 40% decrease compared to 2009-10.

Successful partnership work between the Service and Police ensures that the arson conviction rate locally is still above the national average, by at least 5%.

Over 60% of deliberate small fires this year have been refuse-related, with over a quarter of these involving domestic wheelie bins. Continued partnership working with local councils, schools and other partners, with a strong focus on 'hotspots', raises awareness and helps to decrease these fires often linked to anti-social behaviour.

Fires in non-domestic premises

Although performance is projected to be slightly higher than the challenging target set for this year, there is still likely to be a 28% decrease in incident volumes of this type compared to five years ago. Community Fire Protection staff work closely with local businesses, aiming to provide guidance and advice to limit the occurrence and impact of these incidents.

False alarms

Although the number of these incidents is projected to have decreased by 35% compared to five years ago, these still account for more than any other type of incident we attend. The introduction of a new policy at the end of February this year aims to reduce the number of attendances made to these incidents.

10 Minute Standard

In 2013-14 the Service applied a 10 minute emergency response standard to life-risk incidents. This meant that the Service expected a fire engine to attend a dwelling fire or road traffic collision in its station area within 10 minutes of being alerted, on 80% of occasions.

The latest figures show that the Service has an overall pass-rate of 88%. The 10 minute standard will be used to measure the impact of the Emergency Response Programme (ERP) and capture the improvements in response times created from new stations being built.

More detailed local performance information is contained in the unitary council area profiles set out on the following pages, while overleaf is a table with headline performance targets and standards.

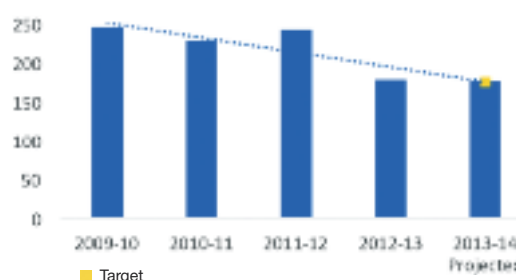
Deliberate Primary Fires



Deliberate Small Fires



Fires in non-domestic premises



False Alarms caused by Automatic Fire Alarms



Headline performance indicators	Projected target	Projected performance for 2013–14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency response to life risk incidents within 10 minutes 	80%	88%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the number of accidental house fires by 2% compared to the previous 12 months 	376	384
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the number of injuries in accidental house fires by 10% by the end of 2014–15 compared to 2009–10 	18	28
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver a minimum of 25,000 Home Safety Assessments to high risk households 	25,000	24,148
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the numbers of false alarms from automatic systems in non domestic premises by 19% compared to the previous 12 months 	1,236	1,527
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the numbers of deliberate small fires by 3% compared to the previous three year average 	1,236	1,291
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the numbers of fires within business premises by 5% by the end of 2015–16 compared to 2012–13 	172	175
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit staff sickness to no more than 5.5 days lost per person per year 	5.5	5.16



Unitary Performance Area Profiles

Cheshire East

Cheshire East has a population of 370,127 and an area of 1,163 square kilometres, making it the third largest unitary council in the North West. Approximately 30% of the population lives in the two major towns of Crewe and Macclesfield.

The area has excellent national and international transport links by rail from Crewe Junction on the renewed West Coast line, by road on the M6 and M56 and by air from Manchester Airport on its northern border. In Cheshire East, there are many Grade I and Grade II* listed buildings, giving it a rich and valuable historic heritage.

While the north area of Cheshire East is one of the most prosperous parts of the country, the area does have small pockets of deprivation. In the south of the unitary area, 10 of the most deprived areas are within Crewe.



National Indicator	11-12	12-13	13-14*
Primary Fires per 100,000 pop	133.6	106.3	112.7
Deliberate Primary Fires per 10,000 pop	3.7	2.5	3.1
Deliberate Secondary Fires per 10,000 pop	9.3	5.0	4.9
Accidental Dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings	10.1	9.4	7.9
Fires in Non Domestic Properties per 1,000 non domestic properties	7.4	4.4	5.7
HSAs completed to High Risk Households	6,516	6,409	6,394

*Projected at 28th February 2014

Cheshire West & Chester

Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) covers an area of 938 square kilometres and has a population of 329,608 with the number of residents aged over 65 years predicted to increase by over 50% by 2029. Approximately 41% of the population lives in Ellesmere Port and Chester. It holds a complex mixture of risks, with a significant transport network comprising motorway, mainline railway and the shipping canal.

There are major chemical, oil and nuclear risks as well as international manufacturing companies servicing the car industry. Chester has become a banking capital for the north of England and the city is a significant national heritage site.

The retail centre at Ellesmere Port (Cheshire Oaks) and Chester Zoo are both national attractions, with thousands of visitors each year.



National Indicator	11-12	12-13	13-14*
Primary Fires per 100,000 pop	116.1	116.2	103.3
Deliberate Primary Fires per 10,000 pop	3.4	2.9	2.2
Deliberate Secondary Fires per 10,000 pop	17.6	10.7	12.8
Accidental Dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings	8.8	8.9	8.6
Fires in Non Domestic Properties per 1,000 non domestic properties	5.6	5.5	4.4
HSAs completed to High Risk Households	7,282	7,855	8,568

*Projected at 28th February 2014

Halton

Halton is a largely urban area of 125,746 people, covering 90 square kilometres, with two large towns, Runcorn and Widnes on either side of the River Mersey, 10 miles upstream from Liverpool. The Runcorn Widnes Bridge links the two towns which share a common heritage. Widnes is regarded as the birthplace of the chemical industry and its development spread to Runcorn in the 19th century.

At the end of the 1960s Runcorn was designated as a new town with new road networks and shopping centres built to serve the influx of residents from the centre of Liverpool, many of whom were housed in new social housing.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation for 2010 ranked the area as the 27th most deprived nationally. Following national and regional trends, Halton's population continues to age with older people making up an increasing proportion of the population.



National Indicator	11-12	12-13	13-14*
Primary Fires per 100,000 pop	166.8	127.3	118.9
Deliberate Primary Fires per 10,000 pop	7.0	6.0	4.4
Deliberate Secondary Fires per 10,000 pop	39.8	28.6	32.3
Accidental Dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings	10.3	9.8	9.4
Fires in Non Domestic Properties per 1,000 non domestic properties	10.2	7.2	6.3
HSA's completed to High Risk Households	3,562	4,106	4,239

*Projected at 28th February 2014

Warrington

The borough of Warrington covers 182 square kilometres and has a population of 202,228. It is at the centre of the North West of England's road network, with the M6, M56 and M62 motorways all intersecting within the borough. Two waterways serve the main urban area, the River Mersey and the Manchester Ship Canal.

Warrington has historically enjoyed high levels of employment, growth and prosperity driven principally by a strong manufacturing base and its key strategic location in the region.

Current estimates highlight that Warrington has a slightly younger population than national and regional averages and a smaller proportion of over 65s.



National Indicator	11-12	12-13	13-14*
Primary Fires per 100,000 pop	148.8	118.4	109.3
Deliberate Primary Fires per 10,000 pop	5.5	3.6	3.2
Deliberate Secondary Fires per 10,000 pop	17.7	10.4	13.8
Accidental Dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings	10.8	9.9	8.3
Fires in Non Domestic Properties per 1,000 non domestic properties	9.0	6.6	5.1
HSA's completed to High Risk Households	3,864	4,388	4,947

*Projected at 28th February 2014



Home Safety

“

I didn't have smoke alarms but I will be getting some fitted now and would urge anyone who hasn't got any to do the same. I don't for the life of me know why I put the dishwasher on that night because I'm always so careful to turn everything off before I go to bed, but I won't ever be putting electrical appliances on again at night.

”



**Life
Saving**