

# Welcome to our Annual Service Report for 2023-24

Supporting our people to deliver the best possible services in Lancashire is a priority in our plans every year. Health and wellbeing and training and development have been the focus of attention in 2023-24, with our staff involved in shaping new and improved initiatives.

The introduction of peer support ambassadors, 32 volunteers within the Service who support people around them through wellbeing conversations, has opened up mental health conversations and is helping to remove the stigma of talking about it.

Our new Lift and Climb mentoring programme is pairing individuals across the Service in different roles and locations, so they can benefit from the guidance and experience of colleagues. The initiative was brought from idea to reality by a member of staff and is supporting people in operational and service support roles.

Adapting to changing risks in communities and finding new ways to make Lancashire safer is a continuous endeavour, and one which we are motivated and driven to succeed in doing. I am particularly proud of the ways we have improved core services this year in addition to the new assets that signal advancements in how the whole sector operates.

The home fire safety check service is our long-established, main method of prevention designed to provide tailored interventions to people in their homes that reduce the risk of fires. Last year, we delivered well over the target number of interventions and saw a reduction in the number of fires in the home and fewer casualties.

Our business fire safety check service is a newer initiative and part of a wider programme to support employers and landlords to keep people safe in their buildings. We exceeded our target in this area too, with crews assuring compliance with fire safety laws in businesses like shops and offices, leaving specialist business safety advisors and inspectors to focus on more complex, high-risk premises.

Alongside these community focussed prevention and protection services, we continue to strengthen our emergency response capabilities through innovation and investment. We became the first service in the UK to introduce an underwater drone and sonar scanner for search and rescue operations. These not only improve how we respond to water-related incidents but also increases firefighter safety.

Dynamic cover software is changing the way we deploy resources across the county. Providing visual data on community risks and emergency cover in real-time, it enables us to position fire engines with more precision, improving emergency cover and reducing response times.

This year, our fleet has been enhanced with the addition of 13 state-of-the-art fire appliances. These vehicles are not just a testament to our commitment to modernisation but also serve as mobile ambassadors for crucial fire safety

messages and on-call recruitment information, thanks to their impactful graphics and messaging. Our brand-new incident command units were the result of extensive research and development to ensure that when they joined our fleet, they brought the best possible technology and systems for effective management of complex and large-scale emergencies. Software on board connects the command units to firefighters on the incident ground and the command support room at Service headquarters, sharing one operating picture to all.

I am proud of the dedication and expertise demonstrated by our firefighting teams in responding to over 17,000 incidents this year. The complexity and scale of these events have not only tested but also showcased the exceptional skills and commitment of our staff. At the heart of all that we achieve are people dedicated to making a difference in Lancashire's communities. In our staff survey, 94% of respondents said they felt that their work contributes to making Lancashire safer, testament to the collective approach we uphold. Together we will continue to learn, improve, and innovate so that we provide the best possible public services now and in the future.

Justin Johnston

Chief Fire Officer

# Valuing our people so they can focus on making Lancashire Safer

## Lift and Climb mentoring programme launched

In 2023-24 we set out to expand our approach to coaching and mentoring, and the launch of our Lift and Climb initiative has helped to achieve this.

Everyone in the Service has the opportunity to maximise their potential by pairing with a colleague for professional, personal development, parallel, or reverse mentoring. Operational and support services staff have benefitted from the guidance and support of their peers.

Digital Communications Officer Alex Daniels was mentored by Euan Withersby, Business Systems Manager, and Sophie Ryder, Senior Software Developer.

Alex saw Lift and Climb as an opportunity to reach out to colleagues in a related area of work and bridge any gap between the corporate communications and digital transformation departments.

“It was a mixture of personal and professional interest for me. We had an in-depth conversation about the nature of digital assets for the Service, how they work, and why they are important. I found it very interesting and useful to speak openly about challenges and what we find interesting in our roles.

“Lift and Climb helped me to develop relationships with my digital transformation colleagues and gave me a better understanding of our organisation. It was helpful from a professional standpoint to take a step back and look at my career trajectory as a whole.”

Alex

Euan and Sophie both felt they benefitted from the experience too.

“I have been able to pick up from Alex a better understanding of the things that corporate communications do and a different perspective on the things we do in digital transformation. It is always a two-way street when mentoring someone. The learning you get helps you to reassess your own practice and understand how we can work better together.”

Euan

“One of the key outcomes for me was widening the network of people I interact with across the Service. I would encourage anyone to sign up as a mentor on the Lift and Climb programme. Everyone has something to give, and it can really open your eyes to what other people are doing.”

Sophie

## Create an organisational culture where diversity is encouraged and valued

Our STRIVE values and the Core Code of Ethics guide the professional behaviours expected of all our staff to ensure our workplace is one where everyone feels valued, included, and able to reach their full potential.

We have also achieved:

- A programme of engagement sessions with staff to embed the Core Code of Ethics has been completed.
- In our staff survey (2023), 91% of respondents said they understood the STRIVE values and behaviours expected of them at work, and 91% said they also understood what is expected in the Core Code of Ethics.
- We have implemented good practice identified in national culture reviews, including the introduction of a confidential reporting line for employees to voice concerns about misconduct and improvements to our disciplinary investigation process.
- Equality impact assessments are now embedded in the Service to ensure we fully understand the impact of proposals, policies, and decisions on all our employees and communities. An external audit of our approach confirmed our assessments are effective.

## Introduce peer support ambassadors

A peer support ambassador is a member of staff who volunteers to raise awareness of mental health problems and challenge mental health stigma in the workplace. 32 ambassadors have been introduced to embed wellbeing conversations and support people around them in stations and departments.

A review of our bespoke MIND distress management and self-care programme has been completed, resulting in a collaboration with The Firefighters Charity to develop content about how to deal with suicide as a responder, as well as coping with self-destructive thoughts and behaviours on a personal level. A programme called Responding to Trauma and Emotions has also been developed to support personal resilience and is currently being piloted with operational and service support staff.

## Upgrade fire station facilities

Consultation on improvements to rest and welfare facilities at Blackpool Fire Station has been undertaken. The design includes new bedrooms, training room, computer room, locker room, and a quiet room. Work will begin on site in autumn 2024.

## Improve learning and development systems

A new learning management system has been successfully implemented and offers better support in identifying and meeting role-related training and development requirements. The system will continue to be developed to support e-learning, maintenance of skills, and course management for all staff.

Firefighter development handbooks have been streamlined and moved to an electronic format held within the learning management system. Crew and watch manager portfolios have been combined into a single supervisory manager handbook which features practical activities, including scenario-based exercises, carefully aligned with the national occupational standards. Closer alignment with functional aspects of the role and a wider variety of ways to provide evidence, such as videos and professional discussion, supports people who are neurodiverse and reduces the administrative burden for all. This approach will be expanded into middle and strategic leadership roles.

## Explore the future of service headquarters

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's headquarters is the oldest building within our property portfolio having been built in 1891. A review of options has highlighted relocation of headquarters to Service training centre in Chorley and redeveloping that site as providing the best value for money and the preferred option for the future.

An outline masterplan is in development to include headquarters, new and improved training props, and modernised learning and office space. Creating a central hub in one location will bring operational and support staff together from across the county and lead to collaboration, efficiency, and sustainability gains.

## Deliver firefighter pension changes

Contributions and tax data for the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022 relating to the age discrimination remedy has been completed to ensure that pension administrators can issue Remediable Service Statements to immediate choice (retired) members and deferred choice (active) members by 31 March 2025.

We have continued to progress activity in relation to the special members second options exercise under which certain on-call firefighters will be able to purchase further pension entitlement. So far over 200 employees have expressed an interest.

## A celebration of our people

In November 2023, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service celebrated the achievements of over 70 members of staff at a special event.

Long Service Good Conduct Awards were presented to operational and support service staff who have given exemplary service to Lancashire for 20, 30, 35 and 40 years.

Justin Johnston, Chief Fire Officer, awarded personal commendations to individuals who displayed outstanding acts of bravery and devotion to duty. These acts not only saved the lives of Lancashire residents, but also helped people caught up in disasters across the world.

The event also recognised the people who personify our STRIVE values, the principles that guide everything we do. Nominated and chosen by their peers, our Star Award winners were honoured not just for the work they do but for how they go about it, which has a positive impact on everyone around them.

Finally, we celebrated the academic achievements of those who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to personal development.

The event was a special moment to shine a light on some of our talented and dedicated people and acknowledge their contribution to keeping the people of Lancashire safe.

# Measuring progress

Our Service performance is reported quarterly to the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority. This year's reports can be accessed at [www.lancsfirecue.org.uk/cfa](http://www.lancsfirecue.org.uk/cfa).

## Overall staff engagement (Staff Survey 2023)

- Staff engagement index score: 74%
- Survey response rate: 49%
- 94% feel that their work contributes to making Lancashire safer

## Staff absence

- Wholetime - cumulative total number of shifts lost: 8.721
- On-call - cumulative absence (as % of available hours of cover): 1.33%
- Green book - cumulative total number of shifts lost: 7.039

## Workforce diversity

- 21% female
- 4% diverse ethnicity
- 4% LGBT
- 3% class themselves as disabled

## Workforce diversity recruited

- 32% female
- 5% diverse ethnicity
- 8% LGBT
- 4% class themselves as disabled

## Recruitment

- 32 wholetime firefighters recruited
- 66 on-call firefighters recruited

# Preventing fires and other emergencies from happening

## No Moor fires!

Last year the Service joined together with partners to introduce a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for parts of Chorley, Darwen and Bolton to prevent wildfires on the moors.

The PSPO bans any activities on moorland that carry a significant risk of causing wildfires such as lighting barbecues, building or lighting campfires or camping stoves, lighting fireworks, or setting off night-sky paper lanterns. Breaching the PSPO is a criminal offence and could result in a fine of up to £1,000.

“Lancashire knows only too well the devastating effects of wildfires following a fire on Winter Hill near Bolton in summer 2018, which destroyed 18 square kilometres of moorland, and a large fire started by a disposable BBQ on Darwen Moor in 2020.

“Most wildfires in Lancashire are caused by human action including inappropriate use of disposable barbecues and campfires. They cause devastation to wildlife and our environment which can take decades or longer to recover.

“The direct impact of wildfires upon local communities can be massive and can tie up critical emergency service resources. We will continue to work with our partners to protect Lancashire’s great outdoors so everyone can enjoy it safely.”

Matt Hamer, Area Manager Prevention, Protection, and Road Safety at Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.

Areas covered by the PSPO, one of the largest in England, include Winter Hill, Darwen Moor and Anglezarke Moor, all areas that have previously experienced wildfires.

The Service collaborated with Chorley Council, Bolton Council, Blackburn with Darwen Council, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, Lancashire Police and Greater Manchester Police, to put the PSPO in place.

This work forms part of our climate change operational response plan to address the increasing threat of flooding and wildfires, lessen the impacts on communities and public services, and improve firefighter safety when dealing with these emergencies.

## Invest in digital improvements to our home fire safety check service

Bringing about positive change in behaviours within people's homes is central to improving community safety and our core offer is the home fire safety check service. To improve the service through digital solutions to ensure it is efficient, person-centred, and continues to target the highest risk households, we have:

- Undertaken a soft market exercise to identify and determine suitable software solutions to improve efficiency of our contact centre systems.
- Delivered 179 training sessions to 33 partners, including care providers, NHS, and police teams, and streamlined our online service, to improve the referral process.
- Following engagement with partner agencies we are refining our HFSC digital referral service for partners and members of the public to improve the collation of data.

## Improve evaluation of fire prevention activity

Fire prevention is delivered using a targeted approach to those most at risk through a variety of activities and interventions directly with communities, by working with partners, and through campaigns. We have evaluated over 300 local prevention initiatives along with county-wide campaigns to better understand the impact of these activities and focus our resources on the most efficient and effective methods.

## Strengthen operational risk information

We use the Provision of Operational Risk Information System (PORIS) to identify, gather, analyse, and review risk information. This system provides accurate risk information to crews responding to emergency incidents to help keep the public and firefighters safe.

PORIS has been improved to ensure crews are given quick and easy access to relevant information relating to operational incidents. A risk calculator has been introduced which includes national and local data allowing for more accurate risk scoring, how information is presented to crews has been streamlined, and a programme of training has been delivered to staff.

To further develop our knowledge of the built environment and strengthen operational preparedness and response, built environment training has been delivered to wholtime and on-call crews, officers, community safety teams, and apprentice firefighters as part of their initial training.

## Community safety initiatives receive national recognition

In November 2023, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service was delighted to be honoured at the Asian Fire Service Association awards. Nominated in four different categories, we won two awards.

Community Safety Advisor, Faz Patel, won the award for Partnership of the Year for our Safety during Hajj campaign. This initiative aims to ensure that Lancashire's residents can travel to, and around Saudi Arabia, in the safest ways possible and in doing so, enjoy the most fulfilled and rewarding pilgrimage.

Station Manager Trevor Jenkins won the Health and Inequalities category for our initiative together with public health of delivering NHS checks in East Lancashire.

Our Race and Religion Employee Voice Group and Positive Action Team were both highly commended in the Champion of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion and Positive Action categories respectively.

Prevention is by far the most effective way to make Lancashire safer and equality, diversity, and inclusion is central to this work; understanding awareness levels, practices, behaviours, and barriers that put people at risk, which vary greatly community to community, is critical to educate, encourage people to adopt safer practices, and deliver interventions to help people who need support.

## Having a positive influence on children and young adults

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, in collaboration with The Prince's Trust, proudly marked 23 years of delivering the TEAM programme. Throughout the year, we have conducted 25 comprehensive 12-week programmes, directly impacting 277 young individuals aged 16-25 across nine Lancashire locations. Our engagement has extended to a diverse group, including looked after children, offenders and ex-offenders, educational underachievers, lone parents, asylum seekers, and young people with disabilities and additional needs.

Our enduring partnerships with Nelson and Colne College Group and Preston College have been instrumental in ensuring that all participants receive a nationally recognised qualification, alongside vital community safety advice. The programme has fostered active community engagement, with three out of four participants progressing to further education, employment or volunteering.

The skills honed during the programme align with the key attributes sought by employers, significantly enhancing the employability and community involvement of the graduates. Our commitment to excellence is further evidenced by our successful attainment of external moderation assurance and the maintenance of direct claim status, underscoring our robust internal quality procedures and consistent support provided across the county.

## Measuring progress

Our Service performance is reported quarterly to the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority. This year's reports can be accessed at [www.lancsfirecue.org.uk/cfa](http://www.lancsfirecue.org.uk/cfa).

Critical fire risk map score: 31,170

Accidental dwelling fires (ADFs): 706 (down from 772)

ADFs - extent of damage: 88% prevented from spreading from room of origin

Casualties from ADFs: 30, (down from 43) including 3 people who tragically lost their lives

Home fire safety checks delivered: 23,239 (up from 22,210)

Other prevention activities delivered:

- 61,877 children and young people received prevention education
- 13 Fire Cadets programmes delivered to young people
- 25 Prince's Trust courses delivered to young people
- 30,054 people took part in road safety education

Figures compared to 2022-23 unless otherwise stated.

# Protecting people and property when fires happen

## Business fire safety check service exceeds target for making buildings safer

In 2023-24, we delivered over 3,307 business fire safety checks (BFSC) in commercial premises across Lancashire, well above the target of 2,500 for the year.

Since its introduction in 2022, the BFSC service has become one of the key ways we reduce the risk of fires in businesses. It provides interventions to lower risk premises (like schools, shops, and offices) delivered by operational crews.

The service is part of a wider fire safety intervention programme that supports businesses, employers, and landlords to meet their legal duties and keep people safe in their buildings. While operational crews check lower risk premises, fire safety inspectors focus their intervention and enforcement activity on complex, high-risk premises.

During a BFSC, crews look at various aspects of fire safety compliance, including risk assessments, fire alarms, escape routes and fire doors. If the result is unsatisfactory, advice is provided to help the business comply with fire safety requirements. If critical fire safety issues are identified, a specialist business safety advisor will conduct a follow-up intervention.

The 3,307 premises checked this year would not previously have been reached under our fire safety intervention programme. Importantly, of those checks, nearly 350 were deemed unsatisfactory, which means we have identified properties that presented a real risk to the life of the occupants and made critical interventions.

The BFSC service is helping to reduce the number of fires that occur in commercial premises and the impact on life, property, and business disruption when fires do occur. It is also helping to build better understanding of buildings and how they should behave in a fire amongst our workforce, strengthened by training on modern methods of construction delivered to all our operational staff by our Built Environment Risk Management officers (BERM team).

## Strengthen our fire safety intervention programme to meet evolving standards

We have reviewed and refined our fire safety intervention programme dataset following engagement with local and national partners to better understand Lancashire's built environment. As a result, competency and training of fire safety staff has been better aligned to the perceived risk of different premises.

Our fire safety department has been restructured to meet the needs of the changing intervention programme. This has seen the development of a built environment and operational liaison team and built environment risk managers, along with investment in protection support and area-based teams.

## Introduce a revised automatic fire alarm attendance policy

Following a review of our response arrangements for fire alarms in non-sleeping risk commercial premises, we no longer respond to automatic fire alarm activations unless the premises provides sleeping accommodation. This has resulted in a 78% reduction in false alarm attendances to premises affected by this policy during 2023-24, compared to the previous five-year average, allowing us to focus our resources more effectively and efficiently.

A new unwanted domestic smoke alarm actuations policy has been introduced to ensure we provide the right response to communities. We have developed a bespoke dataset which is used to influence locally delivered interventions aimed at reducing unwanted fire calls while addressing the root causation. This joined up working between community prevention and fire safety teams supports both occupants and building owners to reduce false alarms so that we are only called to genuine emergencies. The policy and process will be embedded throughout 2024-25.

## Transform fire protection and business safety

Significant changes to fire safety and building control standards continue to change the way fire and rescue services operate. We continue to invest in and develop our protection services, to ensure we remain well-placed to support those responsible for fire safety in their buildings.

In response to the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, we have inspected all 48 of Lancashire's tall buildings to ensure they comply with existing and new legislative requirements. We continue to work closely with the Health and Safety Executive (the new building safety regulator) to ensure tall buildings are legally compliant and new buildings are built aligned to new building standards.

A soft market exercise has been undertaken to identify and determine suitable digital solutions to streamline the working practices of our fire safety inspectors. At the same time, we have developed our in-house digital solutions, such as the document management store, for consistent information gathering and improved data collation. There has been significant investment in mobile digital technology for fire safety teams to ensure the effective and efficient use of their time and provide greater consistency in our intervention activities.

## Measuring progress

Our Service performance is reported quarterly to the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority. This year's reports can be accessed at [www.lancsfirecue.org.uk/cfa](http://www.lancsfirecue.org.uk/cfa).

Accidental building fires (ABFs) (commercial premises): 235 (down from 250)

ABF (non-commercial premises): 72 (down from 85)

Deliberate fires total – 1,812 (down from 2,263)

Deliberate fires – dwellings – 84 (up from 79)

Deliberate fires – commercial premises – 145 (up from 118)

Deliberate fires – other (rubbish, grassland etc) – 1,583 (down from 2,096)

Fire safety enforcement:

- 3,348 business fire safety checks delivered
- 2,237 fire safety inspections carried out
- 166 fire safety enforcement notices issued
- 26 businesses prohibited from operating following serious breaches of the Fire Safety Order

Building regulation consultations: 95.6% were responded to within the required 15 day period

Figures compared to 2022-23 unless otherwise stated.

# Responding to fires and other emergencies quickly and competently

## New appliances strengthen operational response capabilities

Incident command units are critical to how the Service manages complex and large-scale emergencies. We have invested £800,000 in two large incident command units and one smaller command support unit which joined our fleet in 2023-24.

Located at Fulwood and Blackburn fire stations, the incident command units have been built following extensive research and development work to provide leading technology and systems.

The units each have eight networked computers and greater resilience is provided by a satellite internet connection with backup 4G/5G connection if needed. New incident command software gives operators more visibility of data such as risk assessments and tactical plans.

This data, along with information such as cordon details and live weather conditions, can be viewed on multiple devices using the software. This means a common operating picture is shared in the command unit, on demountable mobile data terminals on fire engines, and in the command support room at Service headquarters.

A high-definition camera is on board, complemented by an in-built thermal imaging camera, which helps maintain situational awareness. There is also an external screen under a canopy and awning to assist operational briefings without the need to board the unit.

The smaller command support unit is located at Bolton-le-Sands fire station and crewed by on-call firefighters. It supports smaller protracted incidents with the same incident command software plus other technological and practical features such as networked computers, demountable mobile data terminal, trauma packs, and lighting.

During the year, 13 new fire engines were introduced into our fleet representing over £3 million investment. Each is fitted with new battery-operated cutting and spreading tools for use in road traffic collisions, giving advanced speed and control during rescue operations than the previous hydraulic equipment.

## Implement our emergency cover review

Periodically we review the locations, numbers and types of fire stations and appliances against community risks and incident levels across the county. We then propose ways to improve how we respond to emergencies and ensure that we are

well equipped to respond to future challenges. Following an emergency cover review (ECR) in 2022, several improvements were approved by the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority for implementation between 2023 and 2025.

## Review emergency cover in Preston

A review of emergency cover in and around Preston started, with a view to creating a new, modern station in the same place or another location that serves both our people and the local community well. Over 25 possible sites have been identified so far but many are either unavailable or unsuitable. Work continues to model various scenarios and engage with partners and potential land owners to identify options.

## Introduce more resilient and flexible crewing arrangements

Following extensive planning, the emergency cover review duty system and crewing changes came into effect on 1 March 2024. Replacement of the day crewing plus duty system at Skelmersdale, Morecambe and Fleetwood fire stations was successfully completed. We had hoped to introduce more flexible crewing arrangements but unfortunately agreement could not be reached. However, we continue to explore options that would provide greater resilience across the Service and more flexibility for individuals.

## Optimise emergency cover through dynamic cover software

Dynamic cover software provides operators with visual data on community risks and emergency cover in real-time to inform decision-making on how best to deploy resources. This innovative software assists us with positioning firefighters and appliances dynamically and with greater precision to improve emergency cover and response times.

The software is now firmly established within our command support room and has been used effectively during significant incidents and to monitor periods of high demand, with appliance standby moves to improve emergency cover made as a result. It has allowed us to assist North West Fire Control with standby moves and relief strategies during spate conditions and large incidents, and can also be used remotely by officers.

The final stage of this work will see the dynamic cover software fully implemented at North West Fire Control to deploy resources more effectively and efficiently.

## Strengthen our response to climate change emergencies

Research has continued into all-wheel drive appliances suitable for off-road travel to address challenges posed by flooding and wildfires. A series of site visits to other fire and rescue services and suppliers have been undertaken to assess suitability of appliances. A trial has not yet started due to the availability of appliances.

Eight flood water incident managers have been established following specialist training to support large-scale flooding incidents and one tactical adviser has successfully completed training to form part of national fire and rescue resilience arrangements. In addition, our existing Hagglund vehicles have been assessed for their flood water wading response, with simulation training provided to crews.

## Strengthen firefighting and rescue capabilities in high-rise and commercial buildings

In response to the tragic Grenfell Tower fire and the increasing numbers of high-rise buildings in Lancashire, we have been working to strengthen our response to tall building risk.

We currently have four aerial ladder platforms (ALPs) with hydraulic ladders capable of extending 32 metres in height from which water can be deployed onto a fire. A new 45 metre ALP has been procured and is being built, to replace the existing appliance at Preston and provide our highest reach aerial capability to date. The vehicle is expected to join our fleet in 2024.

Two additional water towers with increased reach of 20 metres have been procured for Lancaster and St Annes. They join two existing 16 metres water towers in Skelmersdale and Blackburn, providing greater cover across the county. These appliances can penetrate slates, tiles, and other building materials at height to inject large volumes of water onto a fire within a building. They are also in build and expected in 2024.

## Broaden on-call firefighting capabilities to strengthen operational response

Lancashire has 32 fire appliances crewed by on-call firefighters, who often have another job outside Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service. They are trained to deal with a wide range of incidents and work alongside wholetime firefighters, responding to emergencies in their communities from home or work.

We have invested in training on-call crews at Morecambe and Hyndburn fire stations to drive aerial ladder platforms (previously only a skillset among wholetime firefighters), and a new incident command support unit is located and crewed by on-

call firefighters at Bolton-le-Sands, strengthening overall operational response and resilience.

A station manager post dedicated to supporting the on-call duty system has also been introduced.

## Invest in our training centre

New and improved training props at our training centre in Chorley form part of a masterplan that also includes creating modernised learning and office space and the relocation of Service headquarters at the site.

A review of training props began and staff consultation took place to inform the design of facilities incorporating new multi-functional props, dedicated props for specific competences, repurposing of retained props, and upgrades to site-wide infrastructure. The outline masterplan is subject to planning approval.

Plans to invest in improvements to our working at height rope and rescue training prop progressed following consultation with stakeholders, ahead of procurement. Training props allow firefighters to learn in a realistic and safe environment, giving them the opportunity to prepare for multiple scenarios.

## Build four new drill towers

Site investigations surveys and design works have been completed and planning permission submitted for new drill towers at Wesham, Clitheroe, Lytham, and Great Harwood as part of our service-wide replacement programme for these vital training facilities.

## Implement operational learning in response to national events

Operational learning drives improvement and our ability to adapt to emerging risks in communities. Learning from the Manchester Arena Inquiry was delivered in 2023-24 via training on Joint Operating Principles for flexi duty officers. Ten Second Triage was implemented across all operational staff and embedded in future training. The Service also trained more National Interagency Liaison Officers to ensure we have appropriately skilled officers to help advise operational activity.

## Lancashire's underwater drone is a UK first

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service became the first service in the UK to introduce an underwater drone, a remotely operated vehicle, for search and rescue operations.

The underwater drone is a highly manoeuvrable underwater machine that can search water while operated from land.

It is equipped with a high image resolution camera, lights, and an imaging sonar, which allows the pilot to see through murky water. A grabber and high strength tether allow the pilot to take hold of casualties and recover people from beneath the surface.

Particularly effective in low-energy water bodies like eddies, catchment areas, reservoirs, and quarries, the underwater drone has added leading-edge capability to water rescues. The Service has also supported search operations in other parts of the country with deployment of our equipment and the expertise of our pilots.

Another fire and rescue first is our advanced sonar underwater scanner, which uses sonar technology, as well as artificial intelligence, to help firefighters in the water to locate casualties as quickly as possible.

The underwater scanner provides a quick picture from beneath the surface, aiding our swift water rescue and boat teams to make a fast assessment of the situation.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service leads nationally on the use of drones in fire and rescue. These new assets reflect our drive to continuously improve both firefighter safety and the services we provide to the public through innovation and maximising the potential of technology in fire and rescue.

## Measuring progress

Our Service performance is reported quarterly to the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority. This year's reports can be accessed at [www.lancsfirecue.org.uk/cfa](http://www.lancsfirecue.org.uk/cfa).

### Overall activity

- 17,395 incidents attended
- 653 road traffic collisions attended (up from 621)
- 152 missing person searches (up from 94)
- 4,678 fires attended (down from 5,632)
- 1,077 gaining entry to property incidents in support of North West Ambulance Service (up from 914)

### Average attendance time

- Overall - 8 minutes 6 seconds
- Critical fire response – first fire engine attendance – 7 mins 30 seconds
- Critical special service response – first fire engine attendance – 8 minutes 30 seconds

Fire engine availability: – 88.66%

Figures compared to 2022-23 unless otherwise stated.

# Delivering value for money in how we use our resources

## Delivering training and development differently

We are committed to ensuring our people have the best training and development available to deliver quality services now and in the future.

Last year, work continued on a programme of significant, long-term investment in improvements to training provision, with a focus on becoming more efficient in how and where we deliver training to staff in multiple roles, duty systems, and locations across the Service, particularly on-call crews.

Following staff feedback, a variety of changes to key training has provided more agile arrangements that better meet the needs of people with different requirements:

- The use of technology has been successfully embedded enabling us to deliver pan-Service interactive training using virtual classrooms.
- Incident command workshops have been delivered locally to on-call crews instead of at training centre in Chorley, reducing the time and travel involved for individuals. We plan to deliver incident command courses and assessments locally in the future.
- The model for incident command training has been changed so that individuals are no longer required to complete all elements of the learning prior to attending the training course, with more time given to complete the full programme. This change is proving popular with on-call crews and has increased interest in acquiring the command skill.
- The length of time involved in obtaining breathing apparatus (BA) and BA team leader skills has been reduced for on-call firefighters where the ability to progress more quickly has been demonstrated.
- A pilot to deliver an initial recruits' course at a local station has been scoped.
- Our new learning management system offers better support in terms of e-learning, maintenance of skills, and course management for all staff.

We continue to explore new ways of working which have been considered in a review of training provision which forms part of a masterplan to create a central hub combining training and Service headquarters at our Chorley site.

## Review productivity and efficiency

Through continuous learning, review, collaboration, and innovation we seek to increase efficiency and productivity to provide the best possible services and value for money to the people of Lancashire. Last year we achieved this in several ways:

- A productivity and efficiency plan for 2023-2024 was produced setting out our direction of travel towards delivering cashable and non-cashable efficiencies, focussing on innovation and digital transformation. The plan for 2024-25 has also been produced by the statutory deadline.
- To improve the monitoring of working hours, a new policy, guidance, and recording tool within our employee self-service system have been introduced to ensure the health and wellbeing of our staff. A fatigue risk assessment was also implemented to ensure that when individuals opt to work more than 48 hours the risk is assessed and they are suitably rested. In addition, a new rota management team has been established to ensure more effective utilisation of working time and deployment of staff, and minimise the use of overtime.
- We worked with other fire and rescue services to construct mutually beneficial tender documents and award contracts that deliver savings and efficiencies to the North West region. This includes successful collaborative procurement of personal protective equipment and thermal imaging cameras. National frameworks have also been used during the year, ensuring efficient use of resources and value for money.

## Replace performance and analysis software

During the year, the Service has invested in more intuitive and modern ways of gathering and presenting data and intelligence. Our first Power Bi dashboard providing key performance data and intelligence was completed and is being embedded into performance management processes across the Service. Work is ongoing to develop further dashboards which will improve performance reporting across the Service and reduce the amount of time required of operational crews to update reports.

## Collaborate with other public services

Effective partnerships with other organisations enable the Service to identify and support people who are at higher risk from fire, safeguard the most vulnerable people in society, and deliver improved services to the public. Through our Blue Light Collaboration Board with Lancashire Constabulary and North West Ambulance Service, we identified a programme of collaboration opportunities:

- We have reviewed and evaluated how we collaborate with Lancashire Constabulary in relation to missing person searches. Together we have streamlined search operations, resulting in a more structured and effective approach to locating people. Our drone development (aerial and underwater), for which we lead nationally, has enhanced our capabilities for missing person searches. As a result of this successful collaboration, the model has been provided to other fire and rescue services and constabularies to adopt.

- We developed our relationships with partners to understand land and property across the board and identify opportunities for collaboration.
- A trial of non-operational staff supporting North West Ambulance Service's (NWAS) community first responder scheme resulted in five people volunteering. Volunteers respond to life threatening emergencies in their communities from the workplace and administer first aid in the initial vital minutes before NWAS colleagues arrive. This collaboration aims to save lives in Lancashire's communities and we now plan to extend the trial to incorporate flexi duty officers.
- Working with other blue light partners, we planned three joint leadership development events for middle managers in the police and ambulance service which are due to take place in 2024.
- The Service has evaluated the benefits and outcomes of our blue light collaborations: missing person searches, leadership development, estates and co-location, and the Community First Responder initiative. These activities are contributing towards improving public services, value for money, reducing demand, and reducing inequalities within communities.

## Install CCTV on fire engines and other service vehicles

CCTV has been installed on 28 frontline appliances and 26 other service vehicles. The purpose is to increase firefighter safety while they protect communities, and reduce costs associated with vehicle collisions. In 2023-24 there was a reduction in collisions of 28% compared to 2021-22 before we started installing CCTV.

## Measuring progress

Our Service performance is reported quarterly to the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority. This year's reports can be accessed at [www.lancsfirecue.org.uk/cfa](http://www.lancsfirecue.org.uk/cfa).

Progress against allocated budget: £0.4m over budget

Partnership collaboration:

- Received 200 drone requests from Lancashire Constabulary, mostly missing person searches.
- Property reviews underway to identify blue light collaboration opportunities over next 5-10 years.
- Five members of staff in role of community first responders working with North West Ambulance Service.
- Three joint leadership events arranged for fire, police, and ambulance middle managers.

Overall user satisfaction – 98.74%

Figures compared to 2022-23 unless otherwise stated.

# Significant incidents

## Waste fire at former A1 Supaskips site in Lancaster

At 5.31am on Sunday 3 December, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service responded to a report of a fire at the former A1 Supaskips site on Port Royal Avenue in Lancaster.

10 fire engines and multiple special appliances attended the incident initially and firefighting operations continued for three weeks.

The building contained approximately 13,000 tonnes of commercial waste and the seat of fire was beneath large quantities of compact waste. Pockets of fire continued to smoulder deep within the piles for a long time and the building was structurally unsafe, presenting several hazards to emergency responders.

The Service worked with Lancaster City Council, the Environment Agency, Lancashire Police, the UK Health Security Agency, and other partners in a multi-agency response to the incident. We worked together to minimise the impact on public health, business disruption, and the local environment.

To improve access for firefighters tackling the blaze and reduce the amount of waste that could combust, the local authority secured funding to demolish outbuildings on the site and remove all the remaining waste.

Firefighting operations involved the use of fire engines, aerial ladder platforms, water towers, high-volume pumps, and drones in conjunction with the demolition work and removal of waste. We also trialled a firefighting robot during the incident as the location was difficult for firefighters to access.

The site was subject to a criminal investigation by the Environment Agency into the activities there, including the previous operations and waste storage, and has since been cleared to eliminate the risk of another incident.

Commercial premises fire in Preston

7 April 2023

Derelict building fire on Blackpool Promenade

24 April 2023

Factory fire in Blackburn

11 September 2023

House explosion in Blackburn

17 December 2023