

# Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Meeting to be held on 23 February 2026

## Fire Protection Report

Contact for further information: Deputy Chief Fire Officer Steve Healey

Tel: 01772 866801

### Executive Summary

This report summarises Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) prosecutions pertaining to fire safety offences, in addition to convictions resulting from arson incidents which have been progressed via the criminal justice process.

Given the rapidly evolving regulatory change in building fire safety, an update on Fire Protection and Business Support is also provided, detailing how the Service is adapting delivery whilst developing our workforce, to ensure that we keep pace with the changes and improve public and firefighter safety within the built environment.

### Recommendation

The Authority is asked to note the report.

## Fire Safety Convictions

### Prosecutions

There have been no sentencings since the previous Combined Fire Authority report dated the 15 December 2025.

### Prosecutions in the Court system

Four cases currently sit within the court system.

The responsible person and company for two Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) type premises, in Bacup and Darwen owned by the same responsible person has pleaded guilty to breaches of the Fire Safety Order on the 13 August 2025 at Preston Magistrates Court. The sentencing hearing Court date was adjourned on the 7 January 2026. The sentencing hearing for the 30 January 2026 at Preston Crown Court was cancelled and we are currently awaiting a new date.

An NHS Trust and maintenance company appeared at Blackburn Magistrates Court on 1 October 2025, this case is about a fatal fire and breaches of the Fire Safety Order in late 2023, in a Mental Health Unit in Blackburn. This hearing was adjourned until 18 November 2025 at Preston Magistrates Court, then passed up to Preston Crown Court. The initial plea and case management hearing was heard on 15 December 2025, no pleas were given. A further plea and case management hearing will be heard at Preston Crown Court on 22 April 2026.

The responsible persons and a company are to appear at Blackburn Magistrates Court on the 18 February 2026 for breaches of the Fire Safety Order for a Nightclub in Burnley. This premises was also under a licensing review on 20 January 2026 at

Lancaster Magistrates Court. During the licensing hearing the defendants did not attend their own appeal hearing, so the appeal was thrown out of Court and dismissed. Prior to this appeal the Police issued a three-month closure order on the premises a week before Christmas 2025.

Two companies and a charity appeared at Blackburn Magistrates Court on 28 January 2026. One company gave no plea, and one company and the charity gave “not guilty” pleas. The case will now be heard in Preston Crown Court on 25 February 2026 for a Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH). This is for breaches of the Fire Safety Order for a Mixed commercial and residential use student accommodation in Preston.

### **Prosecution cases currently being developed and reviewed**

Protection teams continue to investigate and build case files in relation to twelve other premises where offences are believed to have been committed under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005, which include the following:

- Care and Nursing Home x 1
- House in Multiple Occupation x 1
- Residential Flats x 2
- Mixed commercial and Residential x 1
- Commercial premises (shop) x 1
- Commercial but not residential (Used for sleeping) x 1
- Large Nightclub x 1
- Large theatre and after show bar x 1
- Hotel x 2
- Supported Living x 1

### **Arson Risk Reduction**

#### **R v Andrew Dewhurst**

Address – Picadilly Close, Clitheroe, BB7 2RR

Date and Time of Call – 02/03/2025, 07:50

This incident involved a deliberate fire in a first floor domestic flat. The fire was caused by furnishings and household items that had been placed on the hob of an electric oven. The fire caused severe damage by heat and flame to the electric oven, coffee table and other household items, severe damage by smoke to the room of origin and light damage by smoke to the remainder of the property.

The defendant received a sentence of 44 months imprisonment and was made subject to a restraining order for 15 years.

#### **R v restricted due to age**

Address – Friargate Social Club, Preston

Date and Time of Call – 04/09/2025, 16:25

This incident involved a deliberate fire in a derelict premises formerly used as a social club. CCTV captured 2 youths leaving the property shortly before the fire was discovered. The youths were subsequently identified as absconders from a children’s home.

One defendant pleaded guilty to starting the fire and received a caution. Police found no evidence of the involvement of the second youth in igniting the fire, so they were not charged in relation to the arson.

### **R v Jacob Collier**

Address – Furness Street, Burnley

Date and Time of Call – 28/08/2025, 18:02

This incident involved the deliberate ignition of a bed/bedding in the bedroom of an end-terraced house. The fire caused severe damage to the bed and bedding, and severe smoke damage to the bedroom and contents.

The defendant who was also the occupier pleaded guilty to arson and received a 3-year community order and 30 days rehabilitation.

### **R v Stuart Graham**

Address – Bethesda Street, Burnley

Date and Time of Call – 28/08/2025, 03:45

This incident involved the deliberate ignition of a pram within the staircase of flats comprising of four storeys. The fire was contained to the ground floor stairwell, close to the main entrance door and caused severe damage to the pram, a fire door, skirting boards, and the plasterboard of the enclosed area of the stairwell.

CCTV captured a group of individuals having an altercation before being moved on by the Police. The defendant is then captured returning to the property and attempting to ignite an artificial tree in the main entrance, he then enters the staircase before leaving a brief time before the fire is discovered.

The defendant pleaded guilty to arson with intent and received an extended 9-year prison sentence. Extended sentences – refers to the length of the sentence that can be imposed to provide extra protection to the public.

There are also another 15 deliberate fire investigations currently ongoing within the criminal justice system.

### **Arson Sentencing Guidelines**

The maximum sentence for arson in the UK is life imprisonment, as it is considered an exceptionally dangerous offence under the Criminal Damage Act 1971. While life imprisonment is the potential maximum, actual sentences vary significantly based on intent, harm caused (like endangering life), and specific circumstances, with ranges from discharges or fines for minor incidents to many years in custody for severe cases.

Sentencing Council Guidelines provide detailed ranges and starting points for courts, acknowledging life imprisonment for the most severe instances.

### **Arson Risk Reduction Outcomes**

LFRS are proactive in arson risk reduction activities. Ensuring robust and high-quality fire investigations to support prosecution has delivered strong legal sanctions, a breakdown of arson prosecutions is provided below.

**April 2023 to March 2024**

16 arson related convictions resulting in: 8 custodial sentences totalling 48 yrs 2 months, 7 youth referral orders and 1 youth caution.

**April 2024 to 2025**

11 arson related convictions resulting in: 9 custodial sentences totalling 33 yrs 11 months and 2 suspended sentences.

**April 2025 to date**

15 arson related convictions resulting in: 6 custodial sentences totalling 28 yrs 5 months, 4 suspended sentences, 2 detentions under the Mental Health Act, 2 cautions and 1 community order.

**Business risk**

Moderate – Members are made aware of prosecutions related to fire safety activity and / or arson within Lancashire, to satisfy themselves that the required robust approach is being pursued.

**Sustainability or Environmental Impact**

None.

**Equality and Diversity Implications**

None.

**Data Protection (GDPR)**

Will the proposal(s) involve the processing of personal data?

No

**HR implications**

None.

**Financial implications**

None.

**Legal implications**

Failure of Responsible Persons to meet new legislative requirements placed upon them, may result in LFRS undertaking additional prosecution cases in future.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985****List of background papers**

Paper:

Date:

Contact:

Reason for inclusion in Part 2 if appropriate: Insert Exemption Clause