

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Meeting to be held on Monday 15 June 2026

Fire Protection Report

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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 27 April 2026.

Prosecutions in the Court system

The following cases currently sit within the court system:

The responsible person and company for two houses in multiple occupation, in Bacup and Darwen pleaded guilty to breaches of the Fire Safety Order on 13 August 2025 at Preston Magistrates Court. Following two adjournments the hearing has now been rescheduled to 28 September 2026.

On 22 June pleas were submitted by an NHS Trust and maintenance company relating to a fatal fire and breaches of the Fire Safety Order in late 2023. A further directions hearing has been listed for 23 June 2026.

A further hearing has been listed for 5 June 2026 at Preston Crown Court for breaches of the Fire Safety Order at a Nightclub in Burnley.

A hearing is listed for 3 July 2026 at Preston Crown Court for two companies and a charity 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 develop case files in relation to fourteen other premises where offences are believed to have been committed under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. These include the following:

- Care and nursing home x 4
- House in multiple occupation (student accommodation) x 1
- Residential flats x 1
- Commercial premises (shop) x 1
- Commercial but not residential (used for sleeping) x 1
- Large nightclub x 1
- Large theatre and bar x 1
- Hotel x 3
- Supported living x 1

Changes in Legislation

On 6 April 2026 the Fire Safety (Residential Evacuation Plans) (England) Regulations 2025 introduced new statutory duties on Responsible Persons to identify residents who may struggle to self-evacuate, develop person-centred evacuation arrangements, and share relevant information with Fire and Rescue Services where consent is provided. This legislation implements key recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and marks a shift toward risk-based, person-centred planning for vulnerable residents. While compliance sits with Responsible Persons, the Regulations have significant implications for LFRS, including receiving and managing evacuation information, ensuring robust data governance, strengthening pre-incident planning and response arrangements, and preparing operational staff to use information safely and proportionately during incidents. Several actions have been undertaken to prepare and inform Responsible Persons of their duties and to raise awareness of the new legislation including information, advice and guidance along with a new Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC) referral portal for Responsible Persons to support the person-centred approach.

Arson Risk Reduction

R v William Craig Brown

Address – 53 Gillett Street, Preston

Date and Time of Call – 02/11/2024, 22:19hrs

This incident involved a gas explosion within a mid-terraced property in Preston, causing significant damage to the rear of the house. One male (William Brown) was in the house when the explosion occurred but was out by the time LFRS arrived. He was taken to hospital with minor injuries.

This was a protracted incident and investigation involving LFRS, Cadent Gas, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Preston Council. There was significant disruption to neighbouring residents. The investigation concluded that the gas leak had been caused by physically pulling the gas cooker away from the wall, which ruptured the gas hose to the cooker.

The defendant was charged with Criminal Damage – Recklessly Endangering Life. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment suspended for 2 years, with a 30-day rehabilitation activity requirement, and £187 surcharge to be paid to the Courts.

R v Two Youths (under 18)

Address – Carlton House Hotel, Abingdon Street, Blackpool

Date and Time of Call – 27/09/2025, 16:25hrs

This incident involved two 13 year old boys accessing a derelict hotel and setting a fire within. The incident was initially classed as Persons Reported, due to reports of youths being still potentially inside the building. This was later found not to be the case. Five fire appliances and an aerial ladder platform tackled this fire. Extensive damage was caused and there was also damage to two neighbouring hotels.

Two youths admitted the offence. The case was sent to youth offending team for an outcome decision. The case was heard on 9 April 2026. Both youths were sentenced to a 12-month Youth Referral Order, supervised by the Youth Offending Team. A surcharge of £26 was also be paid to the court.

R v Peter Vernal

Address – 1 Summerville Avenue, Staining, FY3 0BD

Date and Time of Call – 21/07/2025, 22:54hrs

This incident involved the deliberate ignition of a car on a driveway where an elderly couple were asleep. Significant ignitable liquid was used to start the fire. Fortunately, the fire had not spread to the house before the arrival of LFRS.

Peter Vernal was found guilty by jury at Preston Crown Court of Arson reckless as to whether life would be endangered. He was sentenced to 14 years, 9 in custody and 5 on licence.

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.

There are currently another 8 arson cases ongoing within the criminal justice system.

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