

**Tyne and Wear Fire  
and Rescue Authority**



# STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

2022/2023



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## FOREWORD

Welcome to our Statement of Assurance for 2022/2023. By producing this Statement, we aim to provide an easy and accessible way for you, the communities of Tyne and Wear, the Government, local authorities, and our partners, to make a valid assessment of our performance during the year.

This Statement focuses on our governance, financial and operational activity that took place between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 and provides a comprehensive overview of how we maintain high standards of service and fulfil our statutory duties.

As Chair of the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) and Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and Chief Executive of Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (the Service), we are satisfied that during 2022/2023 the business of the Authority has been conducted in accordance with good governance standards and that public money has been accurately accounted for.

The systems and processes which are in place, many of which have been scrutinised internally and by external agencies, are sufficiently robust to assure our governance, financial and operational arrangements.

The public and our partners can be assured that their fire and rescue service has and continues to operate effectively, efficiently, and with a focus on fair and equitable practices that support our workforce and the communities of Tyne and Wear.



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**Councillor Phil Tye**  
**Chair**  
**Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority**



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**Chris Lowther, QFSM**  
**CFO and Chief Executive**  
**Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) provides the legal basis for establishing the Authority and sets out its statutory responsibilities, which include providing a fire and rescue service that has the people, equipment, and training required to carry out its core functions.

This Act is the main piece of legislation under which the Service operates. This Act gives the Government responsibility for producing the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018](#) which sets out a requirement for all fire and rescue authorities in England to publish an annual Statement of Assurance.

Our Statement of Assurance sets out our approach to how we deliver and assure our governance, financial, and operational arrangements (including prevention, protection, response, and resilience). It also describes how we have acted in accordance with the requirements of the National Framework while discharging our functions.

As a public body we must comply with the [Equality Act 2010](#) and specifically our responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)<sup>1</sup> This Statement details our commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I), and to our workforce.

## 2. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

### What we Value

We are dedicated to improving the quality of life for those who live, work, or visit Tyne and Wear by ensuring that the public are treated fairly, and with respect and that consideration is given to those with different needs. We ensure that:

- services delivered by, or on behalf of us are accessible and do not discriminate; and
- employees are supported to deliver accessible, non-discriminatory services.

We are committed to meeting our responsibilities under the PSED when designing and delivering services and in employment practices, namely to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity; and
- foster good relations between those sharing a protected characteristic<sup>2</sup> identified in the Equality Act 2010 and those who do not.

### Statement of Intent

We have due regard for advancing and promoting ED&I and ensure this is delivered through our strategic plans, which support our employees and managers to understand the behaviours required to enable our core values. We strive for a Service that is fair, respectful, and reflective of the diverse community it serves.

We adhere to the PSED by considering how our policies and decisions impact those with protected characteristics and seek to remove or minimise the disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics. This includes taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people and we actively encourage their participation in Service activities.

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<sup>1</sup> S.149 of the Equality Act 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex and sexual orientation.

Collecting and analysing equality data aids our understanding of our employees and the communities of Tyne and Wear. Equality and risk impact assessments are carried out to ensure that any proposed decisions or procedural changes do not adversely affect any stakeholder or service delivery outcome.

In support of our equality objectives, we have:

- Provided mandatory ED&I training to all of our employees.
- Supported the Women in the Fire Service events.
- Engaged with, and been active in, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) ED&I workstreams.
- Continued to improve our understanding of our workforce by working with managers to review and improve our equality data.
- Supported individuals on long-term sick through regular employee absence reviews.
- Supported our network groups<sup>3</sup> and their involvement in our decision-making processes.
- An established Inclusion Forum and People Board to provide strategic direction, advice, guidance, and oversight to positive action, projects, priorities, and programmes relating to ED&I.
- Published our annual [Equality Data and Gender Pay Gap Report](#).

### 3. GOVERNANCE

#### Organisational Governance

The Authority is the publicly accountable body that oversees the policy and operational delivery of the Service. The Authority comprises of 17 elected members, 16 are appointed by the five constituent councils of Tyne and Wear in accordance with Schedule 10 of the [Local Government Act 1985](#). The Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria also joined the Authority in 2017. Further details about the purpose and function of the Authority, its elected members, and their allowances can be found [online](#).

The Authority operates a [constitution](#) that provides a framework to regulate its business. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority are elected annually<sup>4</sup> by elected members at the Annual Governance Meeting of the Fire Authority, held each June.

Fire Authority meetings take place monthly between June and March and are supported by a committee structure. Sunderland City Council's Democratic Service provides the secretariat function for these meetings and reports can be viewed on the council's [website](#).

#### Main committees

- [Governance Committee](#)
- [Policy and Performance Committee](#)
- [Human Resources Committee](#)

#### Ad hoc committees

- [Appointments Committee](#)
- [Disciplinary Appeals Committee](#)
- [Personnel Appeals Sub-Committee](#)
- [Emergency Committee](#)

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<sup>3</sup> Disability, LGBT+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender), Gender, BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) and Diversity of Thought.

<sup>4</sup> NB: unless they resign, cease to be a member of the Authority or become disqualified, act until their successors become entitled to act as Chair or Vice Chair.

The Authority's legal duty is to monitor the Service's operational performance and this is achieved through the presentation of data and information to elected members at Fire Authority and committee meetings.

The Authority operates a Pensions Board whose purpose is to assist the Authority in its role as scheme manager of the Firefighters Pension Scheme. The Board consists of employee and employer representatives who oversee the administration of the pension scheme by complying with regulations and legislation imposed by the Pensions Regulator.

Further details about the purpose and functions of the Authority, its committees, and the Pensions Board can be viewed in our [terms of reference](#).

### **Statutory Officer Roles**

Statutory officers are appointed to ensure that the Authority's affairs are conducted appropriately. Details about the function and role of the Head of Paid Services, Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer), and Monitoring Officer are included in our [Annual Governance Statement 2022/2023](#).

### **Executive Leadership Team**

The Authority delegates the management of the Service, its resources, the delivery of its operational and support functions, and its statutory responsibilities to the CFO, who is held to account by the Authority for the delivery of these services. The CFO, with the support of the [Executive Leadership Team](#) (ELT), deliver the required services.

### **Strategic Planning**

Our [vision, mission, and values](#) are key in setting the direction of the Service and influencing its culture. Our purpose and intended outcomes are communicated through strategic documents. We consult and engage with our employees and stakeholders on the development of our strategies.

Our strategic planning framework aids the Service to achieve its vision by planning activities and monitoring its progress to ensure objectives are delivered and the vision is realised.

Our strategic goals are defined in the [TWFRS Strategy 2025](#), which explains how we intend to deliver high-quality services that meet the needs of the communities of Tyne and Wear now and in the future. The three strategic goals of service effectiveness, efficiency, and people are supported by strategic priorities as illustrated in the TWFRS 2025 Programme.

Our strategic priorities are improving inclusion and diversification, continuing an all-hazards approach to firefighter safety, and enhancing our use of digital and data. These collectively promote efficiency and service improvement by driving innovation in the use of our resources.

We undertake a strategic risk assessment to ensure we are fully aware of our current and future challenges. We assess existing and potential risks to the communities of Tyne and Wear to identify how we can best utilise our resources to reduce those risks. The information gathered and analysed is detailed in our [Community Risk Profile 2020-2023](#)

In 2022, we launched our [CRMP 2022-2024](#) which incorporated the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-2024. The CRMP was agreed in consultation with our communities and the [findings](#) were reported to the Fire Authority on 10 October 2022. The CRMP did not introduce any new proposals for changes in how we invest our resources.



## **Industrial and Employee Relation Management**

We participate in political and employee engagement with representative bodies, which include The Fire Brigades Union (FBU), GMB, and Unison. This relationship is managed through the Joint Consultative Forum, which meets monthly and considers issues associated with Service-employee relations and policy development. The forum complements the daily arrangements that support effective industrial/employee relation management.

## **Performance Management**

We are committed to providing an effective and efficient service to residents, businesses, and the communities we serve. Performance is regularly monitored internally which provides the ELT with oversight of service delivery.

Performance data is scrutinised by the elected members at Fire Authority meetings and quarterly at the [Policy and Performance Committee](#). Performance information and associated reports are accessible through our [website](#).

We also publish [Our Year in Review](#) report annually which highlights key data and work undertaken by the Service during the course of the previous financial year.

Our performance is compared with other fire and rescue services in England. Statistics for trends in fires, casualties, false alarms, and non-fire incidents attended by fire and rescue services are published online quarterly by the Home Office at [fire statistics](#).

## **His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services**

Since His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's (HMIC) remit was extended to include inspections of fire and rescue services in England, there have been two full rounds of inspection for all services, with a third round being scheduled for 2023/2024.

In both our previous inspections, carried out in 2018/2019 and 2021/2022, we were awarded the grading of 'Good' across the three pillars of inspection: Effectiveness, Efficiency, and People. The full details of the graded judgement can be found in our [first inspection report](#) and within our most recent [2021/2022 inspection report](#).

Although the three pillars of inspection will remain for 2023/2024, the Inspectorate will remove the overall graded judgements at pillar level and, instead, fire and rescue services will receive a graded judgement for 11 diagnostic inspection questions separately.

Our next full inspection is scheduled to commence in March 2024, and a thematic inspection on the handling of misconduct' will take place in December 2023.

## **National Fire Standards**

The National Fire Standards are a set of professional expectations for fire and rescue services in England. The standards establish what good practice looks like for both the benefit of fire and rescue services and the communities they serve; supporting the drive for continuous improvement across the sector.

The implementation and the process of embedding Fire Standards is a key consideration in our continuous improvement approach and seven new Fire Standards were implemented in 2022/2023.

Our Business Improvement department oversees this work and supports the Service to monitor progress and compliance. Fire Standards are also a useful tool in preparation for HMICFRS inspections. Informal consideration by the HMICFRS of the effective

implementation of these standards will now be in place to support information gathering and benchmarking as part of the inspection process.

### **Internal Audit**

Sunderland City Council provide our Internal Audit function and they deliver an audit programme of work that oversees key areas of our business. During 2022/2023 several audits were commissioned in line with the Authority's risk profile and provided independent assurance on our control environment.

The Governance Committee agreed to the [Internal Audit Annual Plan 2022/2023](#) on 7 March 2022 and the [Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/2023](#) findings were presented to the Governance Committee on 30 June 2023.

### **Information Governance and Data Transparency**

We comply with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and publish the required [transparency](#) information on our website.

Our Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) is accountable for information risk across the Service and is supported by the Data Protection Officer (DPO) and the Information Governance Advisor. We ensure employees are aware of their data protection responsibilities, particularly in relation to the safeguarding and sharing of information.

We maintain a [freedom of information](#) publication scheme, where the Information Governance Advisor responds to requests under the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. We have further strengthened our arrangements by developing an Information Governance Framework.

We seek to comply with our responsibilities as outlined in the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) and legislation enacted in the UK in respect of the protection of personal data including the [Data Protection Act 2018](#). Additional security measures are in place to protect any health and children's data that we hold.

Our [privacy notice](#) details why data is collected and how personal information is used.

We operate a corporate complaints policy that ensures complaints are recorded, investigated, and resolved within 28 days.

We participate in the National Fraud Initiative and have anti-fraud, corruption, and whistleblowing arrangements in place to ensure we are operating fairly and transparently.

## **4. FINANCIAL**

We adhere to financial procedures for budget setting and monitoring, and the production of our final accounts. The [Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/2023 to 2025/2026](#) provides analysis of our forecasted financial position over the next four years. It establishes approaches that direct and reinvest limited resources in addressing our strategic priorities, achieving value for money in the use of those resources, and assisting the budget-planning framework for the preparation of the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme. The [Revenue and Capital budgets](#) are approved annually by the Fire Authority and published on our website.

The [Reserves Policy 2020/2021 to 2024/2025](#) provides transparency to stakeholders about the purpose and level of earmarked reserves held by the Authority and the financial commitments and risks that they address. They are reviewed annually by the Finance



Director and the CFO and reported for approval by the Authority.

In line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code of Practice, we produce an annual Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Plan. This plan supports the provision of services and functions through the management of the Authority's cash flow, and levels of affordable debt and ensures the Capital Programme is sustainable and deliverable, taking into account the wider resources available to the Authority.

### **Annual Statement of Accounts**

Financial assurance is provided through the publication of the Annual Statement of Accounts in accordance with both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and the requirement of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). Our financial statements are subject to annual review by independent auditors as directed by the [Audit Commission Act 1998](#).

The [Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#) require the unaudited accounts to be published annually by 31 May and the audited accounts to be submitted for approval by the end of September (as the Government has extended the External Auditor's timescale from the usual 31 July statutory deadline).

The [unaudited Statement of Accounts 2022/2023](#) were noted by the Governance Committee on 30 June 2023, as the statutory timescale of 31 May 2023 could not be achieved because of the lateness of the necessary pension disclosures which have an impact on the accounts.

The [audited Statement of Accounts 2022/2023](#) are to be approved by the Governance Committee in Autumn 2023 once the External Audit has been completed (expected 30 September 2023), in line with the revised statutory timescales. It should be noted that due to the pension issue, the 2021/2022 accounts were still not approved by the External Auditor at 31 May 2023.

### **Annual Governance Statement**

The Annual Governance Statement is a statutory requirement and forms part of the Annual Statement of Accounts and is also published as a separate document as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The [Annual Governance Statement 2022/2023](#) provides reassurance on the governance arrangements in place and the effectiveness of the internal control environment operating within the Authority.

The arrangements are reviewed annually and any improvements identified are included in an action plan to further strengthen the Authority's already strong arrangements. The Annual Governance Statement was reviewed and noted by the Governance Committee on 30 June 2023 and approved by the Authority on 24 July 2023.

The Authority operates a [Code of Corporate Governance](#), which adheres to the CIPFA (2016) Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework.

### **External Audit**

Mazars are the appointed External Auditors for the Authority and are responsible for the completion of the following assurance activities:

- Audit of the 2022/2023 financial statements.
- Opinion on the Authority's accounts.
- Value for money conclusion and detailed commentary.

In line with auditing standards, the External Auditor produces an Audit Completion Report in which their opinion is given on whether the financial statements provide a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as of 31 March 2023 and on its income and expenditure for the financial year.

The Audit Completion Report sets out detailed findings from the audit of the Authority for the year ending 31 March 2023. Their audit work, findings, and opinions on the Authority's accounts and the value for money conclusion are included in the [Auditors Annual Report](#).

## **Procurement**

Our [Procurement Policy 2021-2024](#) outlines our strategic approach to achieving value for money through the effective procurement of goods and services. Procurement arrangements are embedded within the fire service and supported through our procedural guidance. Procurement and financial regulations are clear and used to protect processes that could be influenced by unethical behaviour. A full procurement process is adhered to which ensures these ethical standards are upheld.

Our employees who undertake competitive tendering are fully Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) qualified or working towards this qualification and each year undertake an Ethical Procurement and Supply test to remain CIPS registered/qualified. Fully qualified members of the team also, as a minimum undertake 30 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training and are awarded MCIPS Chartered Status. Due to the high level of qualifications, competence, and achievements, the Service is registered as achieving Corporate Ethical Procurement and Supply status.

In line with the standing orders and to ensure fair, open, and transparent processes are applied to any procurement requirement which will exceed 10k aggregated over the contract term, is undertaken by the Procurement Team. Delegation reports are generated for any contract which exceeds 20k and are approved by the CFO before award.

The Procurement Services Manager and team provide advice and clear guidance on the procuring of goods and services. There is a robust system of scrutiny, which includes competitive and formal procurement with advertising of opportunities in line with the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR2015). Delegations/reports on contract spending above £500,000 are prepared for approval by the Authority.

We publish a [Modern Slavery Statement](#) adhering to the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. This Statement details the steps the Authority has taken during the year to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in our supply chain or any part of our business. The 2022/2023 statement was presented to the Authority on 26 June 2023.

## **5. OPERATIONAL**

We comply with a range of legislation and regulations and the key legislative requirements for our operational delivery are set out within the following:

- [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#), and associated regulations.
- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#).
- [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#).
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#).
- [Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#).
- [Localism Act 2011](#).
- [The Coroners \(Investigations\) Regulations 2013](#).

- [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#).
- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018](#).
- [Fire Safety Act 2021](#).
- [Fire Safety \(England\) Regulations 2022](#).

## **PREVENTION**

Our Prevention and Education department has two defined strands, the first focuses on preventative and strategy work, and the second centres on safety and our education programmes. Whilst our statutory duty is to prevent fires, we also have an important role to play in the wider health and wellbeing agenda and crime reduction. The work of the department is supported by employees across the Service and volunteers, who work alongside partner agencies to identify those most at risk from fire.

### **Prevention and Strategy**

A range of local and national data is used to support strategic decision-making, including how and where we deliver our prevention activities. To identify those most at risk from a fire we utilise Exeter<sup>5</sup> data from health partners, public referrals, and internal data to inform our Safe and Well Targeting Strategy. We participate in local Health and Wellbeing Boards which has allowed us to improve the targeting of our prevention work. We have a Vulnerable Persons Procedure to support the identification of those most vulnerable to fire risk.

In 2022/2023, over 21,000 [Safe and Well Checks](#) were provided to residents of Tyne and Wear. This involved a home visit carried out by either members of the Prevention and Education department or operational employees. During the visit, the resident is advised about fire safety in the home, security, and the prevention of slips, trips, and falls. Safety features such as smoke detectors, kitchen heat alarms, and fire retardant bedding are supplied and fitted. Where appropriate, residents are referred to partner agencies such as Adult Social Care or other support networks. Our Safe and Well visits are quality assured which allows us to identify how we can continue to provide the highest standards of service. Households are also able to undertake a virtual Safe and Well Check.

We are piloting a scheme with public health teams from North Tyneside Council to offer free health checks during our Safe and Well Checks. Our employees carry out blood pressure and atrial fibrillation tests. The scheme is aimed at those residents who aren't currently choosing to visit their GP for routine health checks. These simple tests can help to identify the early signs of some health issues, where early detection can be lifesaving.

We work with key partners to reinforce referral pathways and share risk information aimed at preventing fire fatalities. To support this work a seven-minute briefing and a 'When to Refer' wallet-sized information card have been developed.

### **Safety and Education**

We are involved in the delivery of a wide range of education and engagement programmes that focus on improving the lives and opportunities of our communities and young people. We are an active and contributing member of [StayWise](#) an online repository of learning resources for teachers and community safety practitioners to use when delivering key safety messages.

Through the face to face work of our employees and volunteers and the use of the internet, and social media, we promote [home safety](#), [water safety](#), and [road safety](#) messages. We

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<sup>5</sup> Open Exeter gives access to patient data held on the National Health Application and Infrastructure Services (NHAIS) platform. The NHAIS platform (sometimes known as the Exeter system).

support local and national campaigns to raise awareness of risks and reduce preventable deaths. For example, campaigns have included the promotion of National Motorcycle Safety Week, Global Road Safety Week, and the Royal Life Saving Society UK Drowning Prevention Week.

We developed a new road safety initiative, Drive to Arrive -Young Drivers Roadshow, to engage students and educate them about the dangers of the 'fatal four'<sup>6</sup>, and provide practical tips for safer driving and ways to avoid common dangers.

We carry out a Community Responder Training Programme to train people in how to use a throw bag. This is a vital piece of lifesaving equipment, to help someone when they are endangered in water. We have worked with Newcastle City Council to install several throw bag boards; access to which is gained through dialing 999.

One of our core objectives is to reduce the number of deliberate fires through targeted interventions. To support this objective we raise awareness through our Safer Summers and Darker Nights campaigns and work with partner agencies including Northumbria Police and local authorities to identify issues and promote our anonymous reporting service [Firestoppers](#). Our ReportIT tool allows us to report fly-tipping and the build-up of refuse directly to local authorities to promote prompt collection to reduce the risk of it being ignited.

We provide several early intervention programmes to address those who are identified as being involved or at risk of a fire starting and fire-related Antisocial Behaviour (ASB). We have employees trained to deliver our [Juvenile Firesetters Education Programme](#) and dedicated Diversionary Activity teams who are commissioned to deliver the [Prince's Trust Team Programme](#) and our in-house [Phoenix Programme](#).

The Prince's Trust Team Programme delivers a structured 12-week programme to young people aged 16 to 25 who are currently Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET). This programme is designed to give participants the skills and experience required to increase their employability and improve the quality of their lives. Our teams deliver this programme in three areas across Tyne and Wear, Sunderland, Washington, and South Shields. During 2022/2023, we ran five Prince's Trust courses which 35 young people successfully completing the course.

The Phoenix Programme provides a course of personal development for young people aged 9 to 17 who may have initiated, or be at risk of being involved with ASB or crime. The course uses firefighter drill ground training activities and search and rescue scenarios to develop participants' resilience, teamwork, and communication and promotes positive attitudes and behaviors. During 2022/2023 the programme was redesigned and now offers alternative education provision directly to schools, providing support to young people who are involved in ASB and are at risk of exclusion from mainstream education.

Our interactive safety centre [SafetyWorks!](#) sees us collaborate with partners such as Nexus, local authority Road Safety Teams, the Royal National Lifeboats Institution, Northern Powergrid, Northern Gas Networks, and Northumbria Police to provide safety messages to schoolchildren and vulnerable adults.

We have four [Fire Cadet](#) units providing training and development for young people aged 13 to 17 years. The units follow the NFCC National Fire Cadets model, with all cadets

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<sup>6</sup> The 'fatal four' are offences prioritised by the police in the National Police Chiefs' Council road policing strategy, to reduce the numbers of people killed and seriously injured on the roads. The fatal four offences are 1.Speeding, 2. Drink and drug driving, 3. Driving while distracted and 4. Non-wearing of seat-belts.

working towards the completion of the Cadet Award. As well as fire service related activities, the cadets have the opportunity to visit other organisations, such as the Northumbria Police's Marine Unit, airport fire service, and the Highways Agency. At present, we run Fire Cadet units from locations in South Tyneside, North Tyneside, Newcastle, and Sunderland.

## **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding is an integral part of our work and our employees are trained to understand their responsibilities, identify those at risk, and take action to avoid any further harm.

We adhere to and apply the NFCC's Safeguarding Guidance for Children, Young People, and Adults in our policies, procedures, and training. Safeguarding training is mandatory for all employees; additional training is provided to those with specific safeguarding responsibilities.

We adhere to the [PREVENT Strategy](#), part of Government's counter-terrorism strategy [CONTEST](#) which aims to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. We operate a Prevent Policy, which aligns with our safeguarding procedures, and work is undertaken during our engagement activities to adhere to our prevention role and support partners with local efforts to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

We work closely with partners including the police, health leads, Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards in the five local authority areas, and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to determine the most appropriate action to be taken.

In collaboration with Northumbria Police, we offer safe havens in our fire stations, which provide a focal point for members of the public in distress to attend and can be provided with help.

## **PROTECTION**

We are the enforcing authority for the fire safety requirements of the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#), [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#), [Fire Safety Act 2021](#) and [Fire Safety \(England\) Regulations 2022](#), along with other related legislation. Our Fire Safety department engages with businesses to provide support and fire safety guidance to ensure compliance with fire safety regulations, petroleum and explosives legislation, and that buildings are built, maintained, and protected from the risk of fire and other emergencies.

Protection activity is supported by data that is used to identify buildings most at risk from fire which include hospitals, care homes, high-rise buildings, and those licensed for the storage of explosives or petroleum. We target resources to maximise interventions and our data is further enhanced through our partnerships with local authority departments such as Building Control, Licensing, and Environmental Health.

Some fire safety employees are warranted to undertake their activities and do so following the qualification standards set out in the NFCC Competency Framework. All operational employees are trained in fire safety awareness and our Senior Officers/Flexi Duty Officers (FDO) are warranted and trained in fire safety engagement.

## **Risk Based Inspection Programme**

We operate a Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) for non-domestic premises. This process allows us to identify and target premises that may have known specific risks or are likely to have fire compliance issues. High-risk premises, as noted above including residential buildings are inspected proportionate to our assessment of risk. Other buildings such as factories, shops, and offices are classed as lower risk and not inspected as



frequently. Approximately 40% of the department's workload focuses on the RBIP and this work is supported by operational employees who also conduct compliance visits.

### **Fire Safety Audits**

We conduct fire safety audits, the details of which are recorded on our internal system. The outcome of any non-compliant audit is sent to the responsible person by letter or email. This communication sets out any actions that may be required to improve the overall fire safety provision at the premise concerned. Internally, we have a quality assurance process in place to ensure consistency in our approach to fire safety and the application of outcomes.

### **Enforcement and Engagement**

We provide fire safety advice and support businesses comply with fire safety regulations. At times we have to enforce the law by implementing a formal enforcement procedure and we will where necessary prosecute. We have robust, legally compliant processes in place to make sure public safety is maintained.

Our [Enforcement and Engagement Policy](#) sets out the action, which may be taken to ensure compliance is achieved. This policy ensures that Inspectors act in an equitable, practical, and consistent manner. To ensure compliance with the [Enforcement and Safety Information Act 1988](#), we publish and update the NFCC enforcement register with all enforcement actions taken on premises. [Enforcement notices](#) are published on the register for a minimum of three years.

### **Primary Authority Scheme**

The Government's [Primary Authority Scheme](#) (PAS) is a means for businesses to receive tailored advice and guidance through a single point of contact and we currently have 17 [PAS partners](#). These partnerships are predominantly with businesses in the retail, housing, hospitality, and leisure sectors and two dedicated officers manage these partnerships.

### **Fire Investigation**

A dedicated Fire Investigation (FI) manager oversees the work of our FI Officers. FI Officers gather and collate information from incidents to identify the origin and cause of a fire. Investigation outcomes steer future prevention and protection work and can assist in the prevention and detection of crime. Information is shared with Northumbria Police, HM Coroner, insurers, and Trading Standards to help identify dangerous products and practices. Our FI Officers work closely with Northumbria Police and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service.

### **Unwanted Fire Signals**

Unwanted fire signals place a demand on our resources and to address this, we have implemented processes in our Fire Control to challenge responses to automatic fire alarms. We operate an Unwanted Fire Signals Group which focuses on the effective management of fire detection and warning systems, to assist with reducing future instances.

## **RESPONSE**

We respond to a wide range of emergency incidents with 25 fire appliances and 21 special appliances operating from 17 fire stations across Tyne and Wear. Emergency response and specialist assets are placed in strategic locations to ensure the highest standard of response to incidents that we are called upon to deal with.

Our stations are staffed by operational employees who work different shift patterns depending upon local risk and work a variation of Wholetime, Day Crewing On Call, or On Call shift patterns, 24 of our fire appliances are staffed by Wholetime firefighters.



To ensure an effective and safe response to incidents, our operational employees collect risk information relating to specific premises. This information is accessible via Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) which help ensure the safety of persons and the effective management of an incident. We produce detailed guidance and have robust arrangements in place to ensure that the risk information we hold is relevant, accurate, and up to date.

Our operational employees respond to a wide range of emergency incidents including:

- Extinguishing fires, and protecting life and property when fires do occur.
- Road traffic collisions (RTCs) where specialist-cutting equipment is used to rescue trapped casualties. Operational employees are first aid trained and some hold an Immediate Emergency Care (IEC) qualification which enables them to provide a greater level of care to a casualty.
- Water rescue from the Tyne and Wear Rivers and other inland waterways, led by the Swift Water Rescue Team and supported by the fireboat, which is moored on the River Tyne. Rescues are also carried out on ice, mud, and other unstable ground.
- Preparation for incidents involving chemicals, biological agents, and gases. We have the ability to decontaminate operational employees and the public in the event of an incident.
- The specialist rescue of people or animals from inaccessible places like cliffs, bridges, cranes, and confined spaces using rope rescue techniques. We also attend rail, aircraft, and other incidents that involve fire or rescue.

Incident command is embedded within our internal assessment procedures, with incident commanders assessed regularly through live and simulated exercises. Under the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#), fire and rescue services have a duty as a Category 1 responder to act as part of the multi-agency response to civil emergencies. All commanders are trained in the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\)](#) which enable a more effective multi-agency response to incidents.

Pre-determined attendance requirements are developed through the analysis of risk information from sources such as incident data and site-specific risk information. We regularly review our performance to ensure we are meeting our statutory duties, which include how quickly we respond to the wide range of incidents we deal with.

Performance is scrutinised at the Authority's Policy and Performance Committee, and internally at the Operational Response Delivery and Assurance (ORDA) Board.

### **Fire Control**

Emergency call handling and the mobilisation of resources is managed by our Fire Control who are responsible for the end-to-end call and support management of an incident. Having a dedicated Fire Control ensures our compliance with the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#), to make provision for the handling of calls for help and allocating the appropriate resources to respond to emergencies.

Our Fire Control monitors resource availability and will reallocate resources as and when required to support an effective and timely response to an incident. This dynamic 'mobilising' allows our Fire Control to increase or decrease resources to ensure incidents are attended promptly, with the right people, skills, and equipment to deal with the incident as efficiently and effectively as possible.

### **Operational training**

We comply with our statutory duty to ensure operational employees are trained to undertake their roles effectively, safely, and aligned to risk. Training requirements include several core

risk-critical skills that they must undertake, ensuring acquisition, maintenance, and assurance. Skills are independently assessed at agreed intervals for key disciplines such as breathing apparatus and incident command. Breathing apparatus refresher training takes place annually, in dedicated “hot fire” conditions, with all eligible employees required to attend. Incident command validations are completed biennially by all employees who have a command role, from acting Crew Manager to the CFO. We are a recognised centre for Skills for Justice incident command qualifications up to Level 4. Our training provision undergoes strict internal and external quality assurance processes to assure the quality of training and assessment.

Further annual training days are arranged for eligible employees which cover areas identified by National Operational Learning (NOL), Joint Organisational Learning (JOL), and our own operational assurance. This allows us to tailor our training to take into account good practice, new guidance, equipment, and techniques where required.

Operational employees are trained in IEC, delivered by a seconded Paramedic. This training provides vital life-saving skills for those involved in treating casualties of trauma. This level of training will assist in delivering better outcomes for casualties of incidents we attend.

Our Vehicle Training School (VTS) delivers in-house Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) training to firefighters. This is followed by an Emergency Fire Appliance Driving (EFAD) course which teaches students to drive safely whilst operating blue lights and sirens on the way to an incident. The VTS also teaches firefighters to drive our special appliances, such as the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP), special rescue tenders, hook lift appliances, and Moffett Mounty forklift trucks. FDOs are taught officer response driving commensurate with their role.

Quality assurance and validation of training ensures that operational employees are trained and competent to fulfil the variety of demands placed on them, taking into account local threats and risks.

New trainee firefighters attend foundation training and participate in a Level 3 Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship. Apprentice firefighters undertake an end-point assessment and our pass and distinction rates are well above the national average.

### **Firefighter Fitness**

We employ a full time Health and Fitness Advisor to support our operational employees to attain and maintain the fitness standards required, and to undertake fitness testing. Fitness testing takes place on a six-monthly schedule and is supported by a procedure, which adheres to the NFCC Fire Fit guidance. To ensure operational employees are fit and supported to remain in employment they receive:

- access to gym facilities at all stations and time to undertake physical training daily when at work, including the Chester Treadmill Walk Test every six months;
- health monitoring by the Occupational Health Unit (OHU) and associated fitness support/bespoke programmes; and
- health Surveillance Assessments are undertaken every three years; and
- access to a vaccination programme.

### **National Operational Guidance Policy Review**

National Operational Guidance (NOG) is a programme of work designed and driven by the NFCC. The purpose of the NOG is to provide consistent, up-to-date, shared learning and good practice across the fire sector and includes thinking from subject matter experts from both inside and outside of the fire service.

The primary objective of this project is to deliver fully compliant operational, training and technical information, and risk assessments, which are integrated into the NOG framework, electronically accessible, and quick and easy to update.

To maintain compliant status, we periodically review our NOG strategic gap analysis which subsequently influences the production and review of NOG aligned product packs, operational information notes, training packages, and station-based training.

By collaborating with NFCC NOG Implementation Team, we are committed to embedding NOG within our operational and training activities; while working towards full compliance.

### **Operational Standards**

National Occupational Standards are embedded within our ethos and we implement a system of assurance to ensure operational employees have the necessary skills, knowledge, and understanding to fulfil the demands placed upon them.

This is assured annually by our Operational Standards team who assess all 63 watches across a range of standards including operational incidents. This is undertaken during the Operational Standards assessment using a tabletop exercise that focuses on four main areas, RTCs, fires, hazardous materials, and confined space incidents. All aspects of performance are observed, assessed, and assured. This work is in addition to the quarterly inspections undertaken on station by local management teams.

Audits are themed and align to national and local learning and the intention is to ensure the operational efficiency and effectiveness of all of our operational employees. Audit outcomes are used to identify areas for learning and improvement which are detailed into an action plan for each watch.

Watch officers are given a 90-day period to address areas for improvement. These actions are recorded on internal training platforms and are subject to assurance by the Operational Standards department which ensures any identified action points and areas for improvement are completed to timescale and the required standard.

Audit outcomes are reported to the Senior Leadership Team and the ORDA Board. This information assures senior managers of operational employees' understanding of current policy about appliances, equipment, competence, and compliance. This aligns with our strategic priority of adopting an all-hazards approach to firefighter safety.

### **Operational Support and Assurance**

Our Operational Support and Assurance team ensure that our activities in the operational environment and the necessary safety measures are evaluated, monitored, and reviewed. Officers regularly attend incidents and training exercises to observe operational performance and to assure compliance with NOG and our incident management policy and procedure.

Any observations which are noted as good practice or areas for development are captured by the Operational Support and Assurance team and learning is shared locally, regionally, and nationally. The Operational Assurance Working Group (OAG) coordinates this work and identified trends are progressed to the ORDA Board for training consideration.

### **Joint Organisational Learning**

JOL is an electronic data-sharing platform for emergency services to collaborate to promote joint learning, and improvements in the way in which we work together, are shared securely.

Through the NOL and JOL websites, we learn, share, and act upon lessons identified, notable practice, and information notes linked to NOG and JESIP. We are committed to improving and regularly share our operational learning to improve the levels of safety for all emergency responders and our partner organisations.

## **RESILIENCE**

### **Partnership Working**

We recognise that partnership working can improve community outcomes and deliver savings for taxpayers. We work with a range of organisations to provide the best service for our communities. The relationships we foster are an important part of our service and we maintain a partnership register which include details of the partnership agreements we have entered into. Our register is regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with current laws, regulations, and accepted good practice.

We co-locate with several partners at our sites. Northumbria Police are based at five of our 17 sites and the North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust operate from four. This will increase with the delivery of our new carbon-neutral tri-station in Hebburn which is expected to be completed in 2024.

We host selected public sector and charitable trusts at our sites which include: the North of Tyne Mountain Rescue, Northumberland Bloodbikes, the Great North Air Ambulance Service, HM Prison and Probation Service, the Salvation Army, Street Pastors and Sunderland City Council (City Alarm and Emergency Centre). We encourage co-location to improve community outcomes and to maximise spatial occupancy across our estate.

### **Northumbria Local Resilience Forum**

We are a partner in the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF). This statutory multi-agency partnership ensures that local authorities, emergency services, the Environment Agency and other services including utility companies fulfil their duties under the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#). This forum enables planning to be in place in preparation for emergency response and recovery arrangements for any localised major incidents, disasters, or emergencies, which may impact the communities of Tyne and Wear.

In collaboration with LRF partners, we comply with our duties by supporting the assessment of risk to inform and maintain emergency plans and business continuity arrangements. We contribute by sharing information that informs the Community Risk Register and aids the preparation of multi-agency plans and documents.

We work with partners nationally to support the Government's counter-terrorism strategy [CONTEST](#). A number of our employees are trained as National Inter-Agency Liaison Officers (NILOs) and work with the police, ambulance service, military, and other Government agencies to share intelligence and support the resolution of operational incidents.

### **Mutual Aid Arrangements**

Section 13 and 16 of the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#), legislates for neighbouring fire and rescue authorities to enter into arrangements to provide formal reinforcement and support to each other, in the event of a serious incident.

We have arrangements with both Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service and County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service.

## **National Resilience**

We host National Resilience assets including Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capability incorporating a canine search team, Hazardous Materials Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM), a Mass Decontamination Unit (MDU), a High Volume Pump (HVP), and a Swift Water Rescue Team. We complement these capabilities by funding our unmanned air support unit (drone).

As a signatory of the National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) National Mutual Aid Protocol we offer incident support outside of the geographical area of Tyne and Wear. This agreement establishes the terms under which we may be expected to provide or request assistance to resolve an incident. Out-of-area deployments are coordinated by the National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT).

## **The Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Principles**

The JESIP concept sets out good practice on how to work together when responding to emergencies. We adopt these principles when working with partners to deal with any incidents which require a multi-agency response. We can evidence how we are working to these principles through online learning undertaken, incident command training, and our participation in multi-agency exercises, and incidents.

The adoption of JESIP is monitored and assessed through competency training, to ensure we have effective interoperability. We have a dedicated officer, whose role it is to focus on the implementation of JESIP across the Service, and in collaboration with other blue light agencies and our wider LRF partners, to embed JESIP both regionally and nationally.

## **Risk and Business Continuity Management**

Business Continuity Management is an important element of our emergency preparedness and response arrangements and a legal requirement as a Category 1 responder, under the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#), to ensure we have suitable contingencies in place, for a range of different business interruptions.

Business continuity plans (BCPs) protect the Authority from adverse events and business interruptions and facilitate a coordinated recovery of critical functions both during and after such events. BCPs are regularly reviewed and undergo testing as part of an exercise programme undertaken by our Risk and Resilience team.

## **Control of Major Accident Hazards**

Under legislative requirements set out in the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#), the [Control of Major Accident Hazards \(COMAH\) Regulations 2015](#), and the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#), we have a statutory duty to provide an effective and resilient COMAH function.

Within Tyne and Wear there are five upper tier COMAH sites. We have substantial emergency response arrangements in place to ensure we can safely manage these premises, and our COMAH team produces comprehensive external emergency plans to assist emergency services in the event of an incident at one of these locations.

## **Health, Safety, and Welfare**

We recognise and accept our responsibilities for the health, safety, and welfare of our employees and others who may be affected by our activities.

We seek to comply with our duties under the [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#) and associated legislation. A policy statement and policy detailing health and safety roles and responsibilities are in place.

Detailed quarterly health and safety reports are considered by our Health and Safety Board. We publish procedures in support of the continuous improvement of our health, safety, and welfare arrangements. These are developed to take account of legislation and guidance with relevant and comprehensive information on the risks they face, and the preventative and protective measures required to control them.

Employees undertake the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) managing and working safely training commensurate with their role. Our health and safety training procedure references the range of training available to promote safety and competence.

Accident and incident reporting and investigation arrangements are in place and where appropriate, reports are made to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the [Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations \(RIDDOR\) 2013](#).

During 2022/2023, we participated in the annual Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Achievement Award and achieved a Gold award.

Our Occupational Health Unit (OHU) operates an online Health and Wellbeing Hub to assist employees and has several mental health first aiders to support mental health and wellbeing in the workforce and offers counselling and trauma support services. Trauma Support colleagues, the Welfare Manager, and the FBU, jointly deliver a programme of health and wellbeing sessions. We were awarded Gold in the Better Health at Work Award.

## **6. OUR PEOPLE**

We have a duty to develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled and diverse. Our [People and Organisational Development Strategy 2021-2025](#) supports this intention.

Our employees have their individual training, learning, and development needs identified in accordance with National Occupational Standard role maps. Regular Performance Development Reviews (PDRs) are undertaken with line managers where both internal Service requirements and development opportunities are discussed, along with development requirements required under NOG.

To develop our managers we invest time and training hours in these individuals. Internally we have implemented a Leadership and Management Development programme, aimed at Senior and Middle Managers. These sessions advance their knowledge and skills across a range of themes. In addition, through the NFCC we have access to coaching and mentoring and their Supervisory Leadership Development Programme.

Our Learning and Development Team are enhancing our Leadership and Management framework to provide a more structured approach to support skills to aid career progression. Development Pathways will support our approach to talent management and provide opportunities for high-potential/aspiring leaders to undertake structured learning.

Reports on matters relating to the terms and conditions of employees, key performance indicators and targets, and ED&I are considered by the Authority's [HR Committee](#), and internally by the People Board. These forums are also responsible for the oversight of the implementation of the Service's Code of Conduct and Ethics.



## 7. FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

In addition to the core operational effectiveness work of the Service, the prevention of fires and other emergencies through risk management, education, prevention, protection, response, and resilience; the Service also focuses on efficiency and looking after our people as set out in our strategy; TWFRS 2025.

Our annual departmental actions for 2023/2024 are mapped against six objectives from our Service Annual Operating Plan that support the delivery of our strategic goals and priorities and are set out below:

- **Enhanced Firefighter Safety** – invest in our facilities and equipment to provide first-class training and development to ensure optimum safety and competence.
- **Investment in Technology** – identify, develop, and embed software and technological solutions to support and enhance the effective delivery of our services.
- **Investment in People, Inclusion, and Workforce Diversification** – enhance our recruitment, training, development, and recognition processes to ensure the most positive overall employee experience possible.
- **Develop our Estate Portfolio** – continue to develop our estate in line with our community and environmental focus and work with partners to identify future collaboration opportunities. Projects include our carbon-neutral tri-station build at Hebburn and the development of our Safety Education Centre.
- **Focus on Investment and Value for Money** – ensure that our services and equipment are always fit for purpose, reliable, efficient, and safe.
- **Drive Continuous Improvement and Enhance Assurance across the Service** – identify and develop improvements in all our functions as required, incorporating improvements from a range of sources, including HMICFRS. Engage with Internal and External Audit and other peer review activities to adopt good practice, helping to further enhance our services.

## 8. YOUR VIEWS COUNT

If you require this document in another format or language, please contact us so we can discuss your needs:

By telephone on 0191 444 1500

By email [Business.Improvement@twfire.gov.uk](mailto:Business.Improvement@twfire.gov.uk)

In writing, by addressing your letter to the Business Improvement Department.  
Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters  
Barmston Mere,  
Washington,  
Tyne and Wear,  
SR5 3QY.

## 9. GLOSSARY

<b>ALP</b>	Aerial Ladder Platform
<b>ASB</b>	Anti-Social Behaviour
<b>BCP</b>	Business Continuity Plan
<b>CFO</b>	Chief Fire Officer
<b>CIPFA</b>	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
<b>CIPS</b>	Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply
<b>COMAH</b>	Control of Major Accident Hazards
<b>CRMP</b>	Community Risk Management Plan
<b>CRP</b>	Community Risk Profile
<b>CPD</b>	Continuing Professional Development
<b>DIM</b>	Detection identification and monitoring
<b>DPO</b>	Data Protection Officer
<b>EDI</b>	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
<b>EFAD</b>	Emergency Fire Appliance Driving
<b>ELT</b>	Executive Leadership Team
<b>FBU</b>	Fire Brigades Union
<b>FDO</b>	Flexi Duty Officer
<b>FI</b>	Fire Investigation
<b>GDPR</b>	General Data Protection Regulations
<b>HMIC</b>	His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary
<b>HMICFRS</b>	His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services
<b>HSE</b>	Health and Safety Executive
<b>HVP</b>	High Volume Pump
<b>IEC</b>	Immediate Emergency Care
<b>IFRS</b>	International Financial Reporting Standards
<b>IOSH</b>	Institution of Occupational Safety and Health
<b>IRMP</b>	Integrated Risk Management Plan
<b>JESIP</b>	Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme
<b>JOL</b>	Joint Organisational Learning
<b>LGV</b>	Large Goods Vehicle
<b>LRF</b>	Local Resilience Forum
<b>MASH</b>	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
<b>MDT</b>	Mobile Data Terminals
<b>MDU</b>	Mass Decontamination Unit
<b>NCAF</b>	National Coordination and Advisory Framework
<b>NFCC</b>	National Fire Chiefs Council
<b>NILO</b>	National Inter-Agency Liaison Officer
<b>NOL</b>	National Operational Learning
<b>NRAT</b>	National Resilience Assurance Team
<b>OAG</b>	Operational Assurance Working Group
<b>OHU</b>	Occupational Health Unit
<b>ORDA</b>	Operational Response Delivery and Assurance
<b>PAS</b>	Primary Authority Scheme
<b>PSED</b>	Public Sector Equality Duty
<b>RBIP</b>	Risk-Based Inspection Programme
<b>RIDDOR</b>	Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations
<b>SARA</b>	Southwick Altogether Raising Aspirations
<b>SIRO</b>	Senior Information Risk Owner
<b>USAR</b>	Urban Search and Rescue
<b>VTS</b>	Vehicle Training School