

# **Fire and Rescue Services in Wales – 2013**

## **Summary**

Since devolution of responsibility in 2004/05, the nature of the role of Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) in Wales has changed significantly. The number of fires attended has reduced by 57%. Societal and lifestyle factors, alongside an increasing focus on prevention have contributed to these reductions.

This report summarises the key findings and conclusions of the *FRSs in Wales 2013 project*. The project looked at the current picture in relation to the FRAs activity, funding, workforce, estates, governance, scrutiny, assurance, performance management, statistics, collaboration and engagement.

The project considered information in relation to all these areas and considered the FRAs continued effectiveness and Value for Money (VFM). In general the report found the FRAs are performing well in most areas. A few areas where further progress is required were identified and recommendations have been made to improve performance in these areas.

This report identified difficulties in obtaining consistent information relating to each FRA can be a barrier to comparing performance, and assessing whether VFM is being achieved. Funding levels and numbers of whole time firefighters do not appear to have reduced significantly, despite the reductions in numbers of fires. Although inconsistencies in data availability make it difficult to draw firm conclusions. This report concludes collaboration activity is the key to driving greater VFM and the National Issues Committee needs to increase momentum to drive forward greater efficiencies.

The report makes a number of recommendations relating to the FRS which can be taken forward in the short term. It also makes recommendations relating to governance, scrutiny and funding arrangements which will require further examination and longer term implementation in the light of the wider context of public reform.

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## **1. Introduction**

2014 will mark ten years since responsibility for FRSs<sup>1</sup> in Wales was devolved to the Welsh Government. Since 2004, there have been many changes, both in terms of the social and economic climate and in terms of the nature of the work of the FRAs in Wales.

The previous Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, Brian Fraser, carried out a review of FRS data in 2012, at the request of the previous Minister for Local Government and Communities. Following this review, the former Minister agreed to the establishment of a project to look at the work of the FRSs. The Minister for Local Government and Government Business, upon taking up position, agreed to its continuation. The outcome of this work is a report which seeks to set out the current picture in relation to the activity of the FRSs in Wales, and to assess their continued effectiveness and value for money. The report draws conclusions and makes recommendations in relation to improved outcomes, and achieving greater value for money in the future.

## **2. Approach**

A project management approach to delivery was established. The project brief is attached at Annex A. The project was divided into 3 phases, information gathering, analysis, report. In the initial phase the project collected information in relation to:

- Activity carried out by the FRAs
- Funding
- Workforce and estates
- Governance
- Scrutiny and assurance
- Performance management and statistics
- Collaboration and engagement

The project's scope did not extend to detailed analysis of operational delivery or support functions.

A Working Group was established to oversee, and provide assurance around, the collection of information, and to monitor progress. The terms of reference are attached at Annex B. The Working Group comprised the Chief Fire Officers, a representative of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Welsh Government (WG) officials and a representative from the Secretariat of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery.

During the project the new Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser to the Welsh Government was appointed. The Working Group agreed the adviser should provide independent challenge and assurance.

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<sup>1</sup> In the report the term FRAs refers to Fire and Rescue Authorities - the statutory bodies responsible for providing fire and rescue services in Wales. The term FRSs refers to the Fire and Rescue Services – the bodies of officers and staff providing operational delivery of the service.

Shortly after the project commenced the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery was established. The remit of the Commission is to consider public service governance and delivery, including the FRAs. To avoid duplication and overlap the project manager has met regularly with the Commission secretariat to discuss progress of the project. The Chief Fire Officers shared their written evidence to the Commission with the project, which has been drawn upon in this report.

Data sources are referenced throughout the report. Issues relating to data quality are outlined in Annex C, which includes links to further information. All 2012/13 figures are provisional.

The findings of this report will be shared with the Commission, as well as informing the review of the Welsh Government's Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 onwards.

### **3. Background**

On 10 November 2004 the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 came into effect, devolving responsibility for FRSs in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales. The three FRAs cover a varied geographical area with a wide variety of risks including fires in homes, outdoor fires, fires in industrial complexes, road traffic collisions, rail or air crashes, chemical spills, building collapse, trapped people or animals, flooding and extreme weather incidents, as well as other emergencies.

FRSs in Wales are governed through the FRAs, who are legal bodies, which comprise of a number of elected members. The Combination Scheme Orders which established the three FRAs determine the maximum number of elected members for each FRA. The political composition of FRAs usually reflects the political composition of each constituent authority, but there is no provision in the Combination Scheme Orders to reflect this. The Combination Scheme Orders stipulate each FRA shall consist of no more than 25 members, subject to the operation of paragraph 12 of the Combination Scheme Orders. Paragraph 12 sets out a constituent Authority shall appoint such number of representatives to be members of the FRA by reference to the population of the constituent Authority compared to the population of other constituent Authorities. To reflect this, it may mean there are more than 25 members, in which case the membership will be the number which reflects the requirements of paragraph 12.

The purpose of the FRAs is to provide FRSs for their area. Their powers and duties are outlined in the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004, which include the following core functions:

- Promoting fire safety
- Extinguishing fires, protecting life and property
- Rescuing people from road traffic collisions (RTCs) and protect others from harms as a result of RTCs
- Respond to other emergencies/eventualities, within or outside their specific area, when requested to do so

The FRAs are responsible for determining the annual budget and levels of personnel and vehicles in each FRA, and continuing to ensure the FRA performs its functions. They also approve strategic plans, policies and strategies. The FRAs determine the composition of any committees, sub-committees and working groups.

The majority of the funding for the three FRAs is received by way of contributions sought from their constituent Local Authorities (LAs). LAs finance their contribution through a combination of council tax income and Revenue Support Grant.

FRAs in Wales are divided into three regions: all of them are coterminous with LA boundaries and largely with Local Health Board and Police boundaries, although not in the Swansea Bay area. The boundaries of the three FRAs can be seen in Figure 1.

### **South Wales FRA**

The South Wales FRA covers the smallest geographical area, but the highest density of population, serving approximately 1,487,542<sup>2</sup> people. It covers the ten LA areas of: Blaenau Gwent; Bridgend; Caerphilly; Cardiff; Merthyr Tydfil; Monmouthshire; Newport; Rhondda Cynon Taff; Torfaen; and Vale of Glamorgan. The South Wales FRA has 24 Members.

### **Mid and West Wales FRA**

The Mid and West Wales FRA covers a large geographical area and serves a population of 896,091. The Mid and West Wales FRA covers the 6 LA areas of: Carmarthenshire; Ceredigion; Neath Port Talbot; Pembrokeshire; Powys; and Swansea. The Mid and West Wales FRA has 25 Members.

### **North Wales FRA**

The North Wales FRA has a population of 690,434. The NW FRA is comprised of elected members from 6 LA areas: Anglesey; Conwy; Denbighshire; Flintshire; Gwynedd; and Wrexham. The North Wales FRA has 28 Members.

Fig. 1

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<sup>2</sup> 2012 Mid Year Estimates, Stats Wales.



### 3.1. Legislative Context

#### **Fire Services Combination Schemes Orders**

In 1996, as part of local government reorganisation in Wales, the 8 fire brigades in Wales were reduced to three FRAs. The Fire Services Combination Schemes Orders established the new combined FRAs for North Wales, Mid and West Wales and South Wales. These Orders prescribed the funding arrangements for each individual FRA. This was a unique reorganisation as the number of LAs was increased from 8 to 22, whilst the number of FRAs reduced from 8 to 3.

#### Funding of FRAs

The funding of FRAs is governed by the Combination Scheme Orders<sup>3</sup> in respect of each FRA made under the Fire Services Act 1947<sup>4</sup>. It sets out the expenses of FRAs shall be paid out of a combined fire service fund constituted and administered in accordance with the provisions in Part IV of the Combination Scheme Orders.

<sup>3</sup> The North Wales Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1995 (S.I. 1995/3218); the Mid and West Wales Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1995 (S.I. 1995/3229); and the South Wales Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1995 (S.I. 1995/3230).

<sup>4</sup> This Act was repealed by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 but existing combination scheme orders, including those set out above, were saved by virtue of section 4 of the 2004 Act.

Each constituent Authority<sup>5</sup> of the FRAs shall pay into the combined fire service fund a contribution equal to its appropriate proportion of the net expenses of the FRA. The proportion payable is to be calculated by agreement, but there is provision in the event of disagreement, which stipulates the proportion will be calculated by reference to the populations of each constituent Authority.

Part IV of the combination scheme orders also set out the procedure to be followed in calculating the expenses of an FRA and how they are to be communicated to constituent authorities.

The Combination Scheme Orders also stipulate each FRA must appoint a treasurer of their combined fire services fund.

A number of pieces of legislation apply to the finance arrangements of FRAs. They include Part VIII of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003 (and Regulations made under Part 1 of that Act), Part II of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004, Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. Broadly speaking these combine to impose requirements with respect to audit, accounting practices and efficiency.

Section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 places a duty on every 'relevant authority', including FRAs, to appoint a Chief Finance Officer.

### **The Local Government and Housing Act 1989**

This Act places a duty on every 'relevant authority', including FRAs, to designate a Monitoring Officer and Head of Paid Service. It further states the Monitoring Officer may not be the same person as the chief finance officer, in relation to FRAs, appointed under section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

### **The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004**

The core functions to be exercised by Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) are:

1. Fire Safety
  - A fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of promoting fire safety in its area.
2. Fire fighting
  - A fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of
    - (a) extinguishing fires in its area, and
    - (b) protecting life and property in the event of fires in its area.

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<sup>5</sup> The constituent authorities of each FRA are set out in paragraph 3 of Schedule to each individual combination scheme order. These are the county and county borough councils set out in Part I and II of Schedule 4 to the Local Government Act 1972 as inserted by Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994.

3. Road traffic accidents (RTAs)
  - A fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of—
    - (a) rescuing people in the event of RTAs in its area;
    - (b) protecting people from serious harm, to the extent it considers it reasonable to do so, in the event of RTAs in its area.
4. Emergencies
  - The Welsh Ministers may by order confer on a fire and rescue authority functions relating to emergencies, other than fires and road traffic accidents<sup>6</sup>.

In fulfilling these functions a FRA must in particular—

- (a) secure the provision of the personnel, services and equipment necessary efficiently to meet all normal requirements;
- (b) secure the provision of training for personnel;
- (c) make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel;
- (d) make arrangements for obtaining information needed for the purpose of extinguishing fires in its area and protecting life and property in the event of fires in its area;
- (e) make arrangements for ensuring reasonable steps are taken to prevent or limit damage to property resulting from action taken for the purpose of extinguishing fires in its area and protecting life and property in the event of fires in its area.

### The Fire and Rescue National Framework

Under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (“the 2004 Act”) the Welsh Ministers must prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework.

The section provides that the Framework:

- (a) must set out priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in connection with the discharge of their functions;
- (b) may contain guidance to FRAs in connection with the discharge of any of their functions;
- (c) may contain any other matter relating to FRAs or their functions which the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate.

FRAs must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions. Where the Welsh Ministers consider a FRA is failing, or likely to fail, to act in accordance with the Framework, the Welsh Ministers may by order require the authority—

- (a) to do something;

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (Wales) Order 2007 specified functions in relation to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear emergencies and also in relation to the collapse of buildings, structures, tunnels and mines and emergencies relating to aircraft, trams or trains.

- (b) to stop doing something;
- (c) not to do something.

The Welsh Ministers may only make such an Order if they consider making an order would promote public safety, the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the FRA in respect of which the order is made, or the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in connection with the matters in relation to which the FRAs have functions. The Welsh Ministers must also give an FRA the opportunity to make representations about any order before it is made.

#### **Civil Contingencies Act 2004**

In relation to contingency planning, FRAs must:

- (a) from time to time assess the risk of an emergency occurring,
- (b) from time to time assess the risk of an emergency making it necessary or expedient for the person or body to perform any of his or its functions,
- (c) maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurs the person or body is able to continue to perform his or its functions,
- (d) maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring that if an emergency occurs or is likely to occur the person or body is able to perform his or its functions so far as necessary or desirable for the purpose of—
  - (i) preventing the emergency,
  - (ii) reducing, controlling or mitigating its effects, or
  - (iii) taking other action in connection with it,
- (e) consider whether an assessment carried out under paragraph (a) or (f) makes it necessary or expedient for the person or body to add to or modify plans maintained under paragraph (c) or (d),
- (g) arrange for the publication of all or part of assessments made and plans maintained under paragraphs (a) to (d) in so far as publication is necessary or desirable for the purpose of—
  - (i) preventing an emergency,
  - (ii) reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of an emergency, or
  - (iii) enabling other action to be taken in connection with an emergency, and
- (h) maintain arrangements to warn the public, and to provide information and advice to the public, if an emergency is likely to occur or has occurred.

The duties above only apply in relation to FRAs in relation to an emergency if:

- (a) the emergency would be likely seriously to obstruct the FRA in the performance of its functions; or
- (b) it is likely that the FRA:
  - i. would consider it necessary or desirable to take action to prevent the emergency, to reduce, control or mitigate its effects or otherwise in connection with it, and
  - ii. would be unable to take that action without changing the deployment of resources or acquiring additional resources.

## **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (“the Order”) broadly relates to premises other than dwellings.<sup>7</sup> It places requirements on the persons responsible for those premises to take general fire precautions. These precautions are set out in article 4 of the Order and include reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire and to take measures in relation to the means of escape from premises.

### Enforcing Authorities

The Order prescribes the enforcing authority in respect of each type of premises. In respect of the majority of premises the FRA for the area in which premises are, or are to be, situated is the enforcing authority<sup>8</sup>.

### Enforcement of the Order

Part 2 of the Order sets out duties in relation to fire safety which are applicable to the person responsible for any premises falling within the remit of the Order. The enforcing authority must enforce these provisions and any regulations made under it in relation to premises for which it is the enforcing authority.

An enforcing authority may appoint an inspector for the purpose of enforcing the provisions of the Order. This does not apply where a fire inspector appointed under section 28 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 or other person authorised by the Welsh Ministers is the enforcing authority.

## **The Heather and Grass etc Burning (Wales) Regulations 2008**

These Regulations place restrictions and requirements on land occupiers and graziers. The licensing regime and associated burning notices issued under these Regulations are governed by the Welsh Ministers.

## **The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010**

The Children and Families (Wales) Measure makes statutory provision for Welsh Authorities, including Fire and Rescue Authorities, to demonstrate a commitment to tackling child poverty. It places a duty on FRAs to produce a child poverty strategy. Through these strategies the FRAs aim to contribute to improving the life chances of children and young people living in poverty and deprivation.

## **Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009**

### Collaboration

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<sup>7</sup> The Order also does not apply to other premises listed in article 6(1) of the Order.

<sup>8</sup> Article 25.

Under Section 9 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure), Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) have powers of collaboration in relation to specified improvement functions<sup>9</sup> under the Measure. Section 12 of the Measure requires FRAs from time to time to consider whether the exercise of the powers of collaboration under section 9 would assist them in carrying out specified duties under Part 1 of the Measure<sup>10</sup>. Under the Measure FRAs are required to consult on their duty to secure continuous improvement and their duty to set improvement objectives<sup>11</sup>.

### Improvement Planning

As “improvement authorities”<sup>12</sup>, FRAs have statutory duties under the Measure to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions, and to set improvement objectives on an annual basis.

Under the Measure the Welsh Government can specify performance standards and indicators.

Under Section 15 of the Measure FRAs must make arrangements for the publication of information described in section 15(2). This includes the FRAs assessment of their performance in the previous year of their discharge of their general duty in relation to improvement under section 2 and meeting their improvement objectives.

Under the Measure (sections 17 to 19), the Auditor General for Wales (“AGW”) will undertake an annual improvement audit and assessment for each FRA. This will include amongst other things a retrospective audit on whether the FRA has complied with its duty to publish improvement information and a forward-looking assessment as to whether the FRA is likely during that financial year to comply with the requirements of Part 1 of the Measure (principally the duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement). Under Section 24 of the Measure the AGW, must produce and publish an annual improvement report for each FRA.

### Community Planning

Under section 37, of the Measure, LAs<sup>13</sup> must initiate and having done so, maintain, facilitate and participate in, community planning for its area. The community planning partners of LAs, including the FRAs in Wales, must participate in, and assist LAs in the development of, community plans.

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<sup>9</sup> Their functions under sections 2(1) (make arrangements to secure continuous improvement); section 3(2) (make arrangements to secure achievement of its improvement objectives); and section 8(7) (make arrangements to exercise their functions so any applicable performance standards set under section 8(1)(b) are met).

<sup>10</sup> As above – sections 2(1), 3(2) and 8(7).

<sup>11</sup> Section 5 of the Measure.

<sup>12</sup> As defined in section 1 of the Measure, and includes FRAs.

<sup>13</sup> County and county borough councils in Wales.

Under section 44, of the Measure, a LA and its community planning partners, including FRAs, has to give the community the opportunity to express their views and have them taken into account in relation to community planning, the production of community strategies and the review of community strategies.

### **Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Community Safety Partnerships were established, made up of representatives of the following designated 'responsible authorities' for each local government area:

- chief constable of the police force
- county and county borough councils
- FRAs
- probation service
- Local Health Boards

Through the partnerships these organisations collaborate on the development and implementation of community safety strategies to reduce crime and disorder, including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment, a strategy to combat the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances and a strategy for the reduction of re-offending.

## **3.2. Policy Context**

### **Programme for Government**

The Programme for Government 2011-16 is the Welsh Government's 'roadmap' for the current Assembly term. It sets out the Government's vision and priorities for action, and focuses on delivery and measuring success in terms of the impact of those actions on people's lives. For the FRAs, Chapter 7 of the Programme for Government sets out the Welsh Government's aim to contribute to making our communities safer by reducing the incidence and impact of fires as well as effective co-ordination of emergencies.

In Chapter 2 of the Welsh Government's Programme for Government a key action is securing effective collaboration between public services. Progress is measured against a number of indicators, including the reduction in the number of statutory plans required of public services by the Welsh Government, rationalisation of LA partnership structures, and efficiency savings realised through joint procurement systems and collaboration.

### **Welsh Government Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 Onwards**

The Welsh Government's Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 Onwards (the Framework), takes into account the aims of the Programme for Government, and sets out the Welsh Government's expectations, vision and priorities for FRAs in Wales, setting their role in the context of the wider public

sector. The two key themes running throughout are measuring outcomes and collaboration. The framework covers:

- Vision, Governance and Resilience
- Planning and Performance
- Service Delivery
- Resilience
- Resources

In line with the outcome based approach of the Programme for Government, the Framework stipulates FRAs should demonstrate the impact of their work through results based accountability methodology.

### **Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 - Part 1 Guidance to Fire and Rescue Authorities**

This guidance covers improvement under part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure), as it specifically applies to FRAs.

The guidance states, whilst there is no statutory requirement for FRAs to have a scrutiny function, it is good practice for the FRAs to have one. It goes on to set out a clear role for a FRA in scrutinising its improvement processes. The guidance recommends this should extend to:

- Scrutiny of the processes a FRA has gone through in the discharge of the general duty to improve.
- Scrutiny of the fitness of the organisation to discharge the general duty to improve.
- Scrutiny of the processes the FRA has gone through in the selection of its improvement objectives, including a review of the level of engagement with stakeholders.
- Scrutiny of the monitoring of the progress of the delivery of the FRA's improvement objectives.
- Promoting innovation by challenging the status quo and encouraging different ways of thinking and options for delivery.

The Guidance sets out it will be for the Auditor General Wales (AGW) and relevant regulators to decide whether scrutiny processes are sufficiently robust to be relied upon in the exercise of their functions.

### **Wales Arson Reduction Strategy**

The Wales Arson Reduction Strategy 2012-15 (WARS 2) sets the agenda for multi-agency working to tackle arson, linking to the actions in the Programme for Government. The Welsh Government provides funding for arson reduction activity. Over the period 2004/05 to 2012/13 the Welsh Government has

provided in the region of £10,000,000 to support arson reduction activity. In 2013/14, £751,590 was allocated.<sup>14</sup>

The Joint Arson Group (JAG) developed and oversees implementation of the WARS 2. It includes representatives of the FRSs, the Police, the Welsh Government, Firebrake Wales and Natural Resources Wales. The strategy outlines six priority areas, key to achieving reductions in arson, and sets a target of a 15% reduction over the life of the strategy.

### **Child Poverty Strategy**

The Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy, developed from the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, identifies 13 aims relating to contributing to the eradication of child poverty and specifies a number of public bodies, including the FRAs, who must deliver against at least one of the aims. The most relevant aims to the FRAs are:

- Broad Aim 6: To support parenting of children
- Broad Aim 9: To ensure all children grow up in safe and cohesive communities
- Broad Aim 13: To help young people participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities

### **Welsh Government and FRAs Children and Young People (CYP) Strategy**

This strategy sets out the Welsh Government's and the three FRAs' in Wales vision and direction for delivering Children and Young People's intervention activities. The strategy is delivered by the FRAs.

The strategy has two strands:

- Firstly, general education to children and young people in Wales to keep them safe from fire and fire related accidents; and
- Secondly, programmes and interventions which deliver effective reduction of anti-social fire crime behaviour and engage with children and young people who are on the cusp of offending or have already offended.

### **All Wales Youth Offending Strategy**

The All Wales Youth Offending Strategy was published jointly in 2004 and was the result of the Welsh Government, the Youth Justice Board and local agencies working together to develop a strategy which provided a national framework for preventing offending and re-offending among children and young people in Wales. In 2009 The Welsh Government and the Youth Justice Board reviewed and refreshed the delivery mechanisms for the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy (The 2009-2011 All Wales Youth Offending Strategy Delivery Plan).

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<sup>14</sup>Data provided by North Wales FRS, South Wales FRS and Mid and West Wales FRS.

## **The Welsh Government and FRAs Road Safety Strategy 2012-15**

The joint Welsh Government and FRAs Road Safety Strategy 2012-15 states FRAs must maintain their commitment to the preventative road safety agenda and multi agency working, particularly focusing on vulnerable road user groups in their area.

## **The Welsh Government Road Safety Framework 2013**

The framework introduces challenging targets, and calls upon all partner organisations with a role in improving road safety to tailor their activities to reflect the objectives set out in the framework. It states activity should be based on robust data, and focus on reducing casualties. It stresses the need for partners to work together to achieve outcomes and calls on the introduction of results based accountability.

### **3.3. Financial context**

It is no secret the future funding outlook for the public sector in Wales will be challenging. The 2013 UK Spending Round (SR) has set the Wales DEL Budget at just over £15bn. This includes Fiscal Resource DEL of £13.64bn and Capital DEL of £1.46bn. The Spending Round shows the Welsh Government is taking a 2% cut between 2014-15 and 2015-16. Overall, the Welsh Government's budget in 2015-16 will be £280m lower in real terms than the budget in 2014-15. These cuts come on top of those already managed since 2010 - so by 2015-16, the Welsh Government's budget will be lower by £1,680m in real terms than it was in 2010-11.

The SR announcement focuses on 2015-16 but all indicators and forecasts suggest we can expect the squeeze on public sector expenditure to continue beyond then. If the trajectory of the UK Government's overall expenditure projections is maintained, then the Welsh Government budget could well be 20 per cent lower in real terms at the end of this decade than at the beginning.

The Welsh Government capital budget in 2015-16 will be a third lower in real terms than in 2009-10. Almost £180m of this, is subject to restrictions and can only be used for loans and equity investments.

The other major source of LA revenue funding is council tax. Council tax rises in Wales have averaged 3.4% over the last six years. The need to limit the pressures on household budgets means council tax income is unlikely to rise significantly in the coming years.

### **3.4. Collaborative context**

Public service reform underpins the fairer and more prosperous vision for Wales which is set out in the Programme for Government. The Welsh Government has a practical programme of action which supports the delivery of improved services against a backdrop of continuing financial challenges.

Much of the evidence on what works in improving services supports increased collaboration to deliver better services regionally or nationally<sup>15</sup>. To provide clarity around how public services should collaborate, the Welsh Government has set out a geographical footprint for regional collaborative activity common across public services.

In a speech to the WLGA in June 2013, the Welsh Government Minister for Local Government and Government Business emphasised the importance of collaboration, stating in the context of reducing public sector funding and the need for reform:

I truly believe collaboration in the provision of public services is the key. ...whilst collaboration is taking place now - my message is simple, in order to protect the most vulnerable in our society, to ensure the people of Wales have public services which are fit-for-purpose and services they can be proud of, we must look at how less funding can be used better.

### **3.5. Changing landscape**

The number of fires attended by FRAs has reduced by 57% since devolution in 2004. Societal factors have contributed to the reductions, including changes in regulations making houses and home appliances safer and furniture and other materials more fire resistant. Changes in lifestyle have also contributed as Wales has seen a reduction in the number of smokers and the use of chip pans.

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<sup>15</sup> Welsh Government's Comparison of the Regional Footprint Areas, 2013.

## 4. Current situation

### 4.1. What the FRAs do?

The FRAs in Wales undertake an increasingly wide variety of activities linked to the prevention of both accidental and deliberate fires and road traffic collisions (RTCs), as well as the provision of response and rescue services in the event of fires and other emergencies.

#### Prevention

A range of preventative activity takes place across the 3 FRAs, including:

- home fire safety
- community fire safety
- business fire safety
- arson reduction
- education
- road safety
- engaging with children and young people

Through education, engagement and prevention programmes the FRAs in Wales strive to decrease the number of fires, both accidental and deliberate, with the overall objective of reducing the numbers of deaths, injuries and losses from fires.

#### **Home Fire Safety**

The FRAs in Wales play the leading role in promoting fire safety in the home. The largest area of activity is the provision of home fire safety checks (HFSCs). In HFSCs the FRAs go into homes to offer advice on how to make the home safe and where appropriate, fit smoke alarms and provide other safety equipment for free. The table at figure 2 shows the increased provision of HFSCs over the period 2004/05 – 2011/12.

*Fig. 2<sup>16</sup> - total number of HFSCs, Wales*

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Wales	11,782	21,415	44,729	62,900	68,238	76,520	90,700	73,170
North Wales	2,756	2,257	16,176	26,504	31,180	32,802	36,905	28,472
Mid and West Wales	9,026	14,080	12,808	20,674	19,425	19,820	22,854	18,761
South Wales	0	5,078	15,745	15,722	17,633	23,898	30,941	25,937

The Welsh Government provides capital funding for the FRAs to purchase smoke detectors (including hard of hearing alarms and other preventative equipment) to promote fire safety and to deliver targeted HFSCs to homes in Wales. Funding allocated for 2013/14 amounts to £1.3 million. Approximately

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<sup>16</sup> Stats Wales.

£286,000 of revenue funding has also been provided in 2013/14 to fund a third sector co-ordinator and a HFSC partnership delivery initiative.

### **Community Fire Safety**

Rural environment wildfires have increased in most parts of Wales. The FRAs undertake a range of activity with other agencies, to make occupiers of land and graziers aware of restrictions and requirements.

South Wales FRA has established Bernie, an engagement project tailored for the communities which historically suffer from a high amount of deliberate grass and mountain fires and uses new social marketing techniques in education, diversionary activities, enforcement, operational tactics, along with partnership working to reduce deliberate grass and mountain fires. In conjunction with SW FRA, the project has been adopted by the Community Safety Partnerships in Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf and will be run in the areas of Maesteg, Bargoed, Merthyr, Tonypany and Treorchy. Mid and West Wales FRA and North Wales FRA are talking to South Wales FRA about the benefits of the initiative.

A range of other activity takes place across Wales. These activities are discussed as part of the Arson Reduction Team meetings between the three FRAs. Activity includes:

- awareness raising events with Farmers Unions, young farmers conventions and the Royal Welsh show;
- all Wales literature, promoting fire safety across a wide range of risks, including Summer Fire Safety, has been produced collaboratively;
- South Wales FRA provide advice regarding the use of fire as a land management tool and how to apply 'The Heather and Grass Burning Code';
- North Wales FRA run campaigns in warmer weather to raise awareness and promote countryside safety through the media and with partner agencies, e.g. Natural Resources Wales and the Police; and,
- Mid and West Wales FRA has established Land Management Groups to work with partners to reduce the impact of deliberately set wildfires.

### **Business (Legislative) Fire Safety**

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the Order) places responsibility for fire safety within most non domestic premises on the owner or operator of a building. The FRAs, as enforcing Authorities, seek to enable those responsible for non-domestic buildings to understand their responsibilities. The FRAs are responsible for enforcement of the provisions of the Order. Where the fire safety duties are not being complied with, they may issue notices to require a person to take action to remove or reduce any identified fire risks.

In undertaking their functions under the Order, the FRAs utilise the UK Department for Communities and Local Government's Integrated Risk

Management Planning Guidance Note 4, which stipulates ‘Fire and Rescue Authorities should – in drawing up their enforcement programs – prioritise inspection of places which, in the case of fire, pose a significant risk to life. The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) has developed a suite of policies, procedures and guidance to assist with the implementation of the Order in respect of business premises. The Welsh Government also provided guidance on aspects of the Order in 2005<sup>17</sup>.

Fire safety inspections are a necessary part not only of the enforcement regime but also of the data gathering and risk analysis procedures which will underpin risk management plans. Each FRA examines the risk data for its area and assigns the resources appropriately. IRMP Guidance Note 4 does not set any fixed frequency for inspections. It does state, in Section 4.12:

“In order to demonstrate that a Fire Authority is meeting its legislative responsibilities at every stage, the processes by which the levels of risk and the resulting inspection activity have been determined should be recorded, transparent and auditable.”

The Operational Assurance of Service Delivery (the OASD) is the process by which the FRAs carry out a self assessment against a centrally provided framework on a specific delivery area each year. Each FRAs self assessment is assessed through a peer review by a team of members of the other two FRAs in Wales, supported by officials from the Welsh Government and the Wales Audit Office (WAO). (More information on the OASD process, and recommendations about its future, can be found on pages 37-38).

The OASD assessment in 2012-13 focussed on Legislative Fire Safety, the term used to describe the FRAs response to the Order and assessed the ‘Direction of Travel’, which reviews progress against recommendations from previous years’ assessments.

Brian Fraser, the former Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser for Wales (CFAD), produced a summary report of the findings (attached at Annex D). Whilst examples of collaboration were found, the former CFAD felt a number of opportunities for collaboration and integration of functions and services had not been taken. In his view, these opportunities could be explored through the National Issues Committee.

The National Issues Committee (NIC) Annual Report 2013 was published in October 2013. The NIC has developed a work stream to consider Business Fire Safety. The annual report states the focus has been on ‘developing uniformity...across Wales through alignment of strategies and procedures.’<sup>18</sup> It outlines progress made to introduce joint initiatives, designed to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

These include:

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<sup>17</sup> Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 Welsh Guidance Note: Determination request process under article 36 for enforcing authorities and responsible individuals.

<sup>18</sup> National Issues Committee Annual Report 2013.

- The introduction of all-Wales legal services provision in December 2012, which will provide a joint legal services contract.
- The development of a common approach, and policy, to Unwanted Fire Signals, which is due to be launched soon.
- A standardised approach to Fire Investigation.

The annual report states non-cashable savings can be attributed to these developments, through the potential to share resources for fire investigative work and staff support for legal teams. It states savings can also be associated with the introduction of the All Wales Unwanted Fire Signals Policy. However, the report lacks details around the potential amount of savings to be made and over what time frame.

### **Arson Reduction**

The Wales Arson Reduction Strategy (WARS2) provides the blueprint for multiagency arson reduction activity and the FRAs work collaboratively with partners to reduce the incidence of arson, raise awareness of deliberate fires and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.

The FRAs run the Phoenix project, working with young people between the ages of 11- 25 to address issues ranging from low self esteem and lack of confidence to anti social behaviour and fire related problems such as deliberate fire setting and hoax calls. It is aimed at those who are struggling in school and those who have already committed fire related crimes, as well as those who are at risk of doing so.

### **Engaging with Children and Young People**

Educating young people to prevent accidental and deliberate fires is a key objective for both Welsh Government and the FRAs. The Welsh Government/FRA's Children's and Young People Strategy sets out the priority actions for the FRAs, in relation to:

- Tier 1 interventions – those designed to target young offenders.
- Tier 2 interventions – those designed to target young people on the cusp of offending.
- Tier 3 interventions – general activities for all children and young people in Wales.

All three FRAs attend schools and deliver programmes aimed at different age groups.

South Wales FRA conducts a variety of school aged educational initiatives, some of which are delivered directly, whilst others can be accessed by teachers. It runs a multi-agency programme, Crucial Crew, aimed at year 6 pupils, as well as a Forest School for year 4 pupils to enhance understanding of the natural environment and encourage respect.

South Wales FRA also run a two year Young Fire-fighters Scheme, for young people aged between 14 and 18. The programme offers the Young

Firefighters the opportunity to work towards a BTEC Level 2 Award in FRSs in the Community. The qualification focuses on fire safety in the home, arson, anti-social behaviour and RTCs. The youth training development programme lets young people take part in drills, exercises and learn how to use FRS equipment and learn about its procedures.

North Wales FRA has Community Safety Educationalists who visit every primary and secondary school in North Wales, targeting years 1, 4 and 7. In year 1 they educate about the dangers of matches. In years 4 and 7 they educate about the importance of smoke alarms and escape routes in the home. Crucial Crew is a multi-agency programme, aimed at year 7 pupils, which teaches about fire safety in a variety of dangerous situations.

North Wales FRA has several branches of the Young Fire fighters Association (YFA) for young people aged between 11 and 17. Activities are aligned with those in other FRA areas. NW FRA is in the process of moving to the 2 year BTEC accredited program, as in other parts in Wales.

Mid and West Wales FRA runs a fire safety education programme which involves school liaison officers visiting each key stage level in schools. The programme aims to create awareness of fire hazards in and around the home, to provide fire safety information enabling children and young people to prevent, detect and escape from fire and to empower young people to resist peer pressure, in relation to fire crimes such as arson and hoax calls.

Mid and West Wales FRA run a Young Fire Fighters schemes, a two year programme for young people aged between 12 and 18. The Young Firefighters can work towards a BTEC Level 2 Award in FRSs in the Community. Young Fire Fighters also design their own community projects and are assessed on team and leadership skills. The scheme aims to develop the young people's respect for their communities, self-confidence, discipline and a sense of citizenship.

### Road Safety

All FRAs are represented on the Road Safety Wales Policy Group, a road safety partnership comprised of the 3 emergency services, LAs, the Welsh Government, the Safety Camera Partnership and Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST).

### Response

In addition to the significant amount of prevention activity they undertake, the FRAs are responsible for ensuring they respond to fire incidents, including taking calls, directing a response, providing advice and attending dwelling and other fires.

FRAs also have a duty to respond to road traffic collisions (RTCs), to make provision for rescuing people, and protecting people from serious harm in the event of RTCs in its area.

They are also required to respond to other emergencies, providing an effective and efficient emergency response for the communities they serve, as well as being an integral part of regional and national response arrangements.

#### **4.2. How well are they performing?**

In 2008, it was estimated the cost to the economy of a single fire death was £1.65 million and the estimated average consequential cost of a domestic fire was £44,523<sup>19</sup>. Reductions in the numbers of fires have financial benefits across the economy.

Since the devolution of responsibility for FRAs to the National Assembly for Wales, in 2004/05, to the latest statistics available for 2012/13, the number of fires attended in Wales have reduced by 57%, deliberate fires have reduced by 68% and accidental dwelling fires have reduced by 20%; thus reducing fire deaths in Wales by 37% and injuries by 32%.<sup>20</sup>

Societal changes, including safer materials in home furnishings, safer electrical appliances and a reduced number of smokers, have contributed to reductions in the numbers of fires in Wales, and other parts of the UK. As well as societal changes a focus on prevention through initiatives, such as free Home Fire Safety Checks, has further reduced the numbers of fires.

#### **Attendance at fires**

Similar patterns of reduction in attendance at fire incidents can be seen in Wales, England and Scotland over the period 2004/05 – 2012/13 (see the chart at figure 3). This indicates a consistent downward trend, likely to be influenced by external factors, such as social and lifestyle changes.

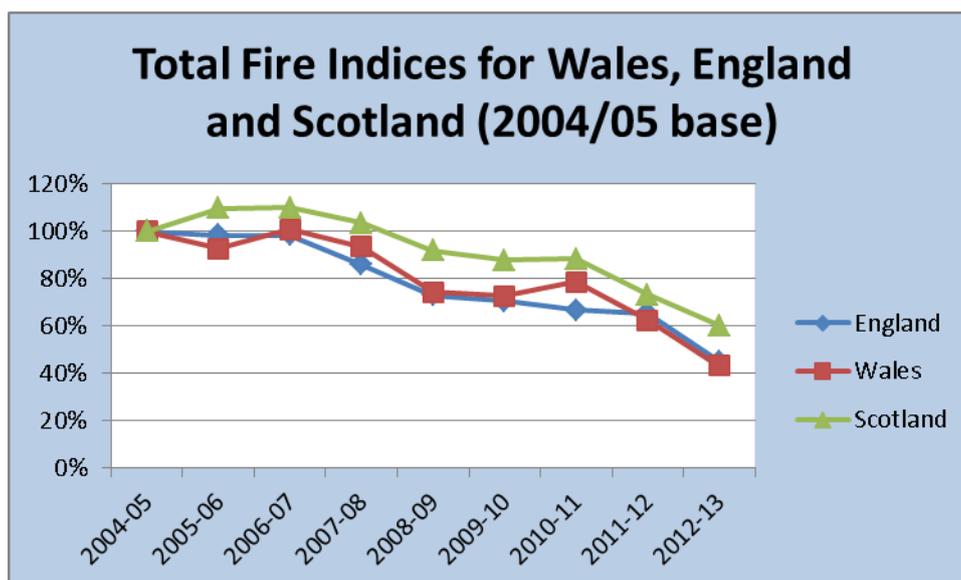
*Fig. 3*<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Economic cost of fire: estimates 2008.

<sup>20</sup> 2012-13 data extracted from IRS in May 2013, based on Statswales quarterly data. 2004/05 data extracted from the FDR1 and FDR3 forms.

<sup>21</sup> Scottish data from the National Statistics Publication for Scotland, (2013), *Fire Statistics Scotland 2012-13*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 05/11/2013. Welsh and English data from National Statistics, (2013), *Fire Statistics Monitor April 2012 to March 2013*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 05/11/2013.



More detailed information on the numbers of fires attended by each FRA in Wales can be found in Annex E.

### Deaths and casualties

The chart at figure 4<sup>22</sup> shows a greater reduction in deaths and injuries in all fires in Wales than in England or Scotland (pre the Scottish FRS reorganisation in 2013). In discussions, the FRSs pointed to the focus on, and investment in, prevention activity as key to achieving significant reductions. The table at figure 5 shows the actual numbers per country.

Fig. 4<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Excludes precautionary checks and first aid. For definitions and further information please see Section 11 in the publication Fire Statistics 2012-13 <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/fire-statistics/?lang=en>.

<sup>23</sup> Scottish data from the National Statistics Publication for Scotland, (2013), *Fire Statistics Scotland 2012-13*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 05/11/2013. Welsh and English data from National Statistics, (2013), *Fire Statistics Monitor April 2012 to March 2013*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 05/11/2013

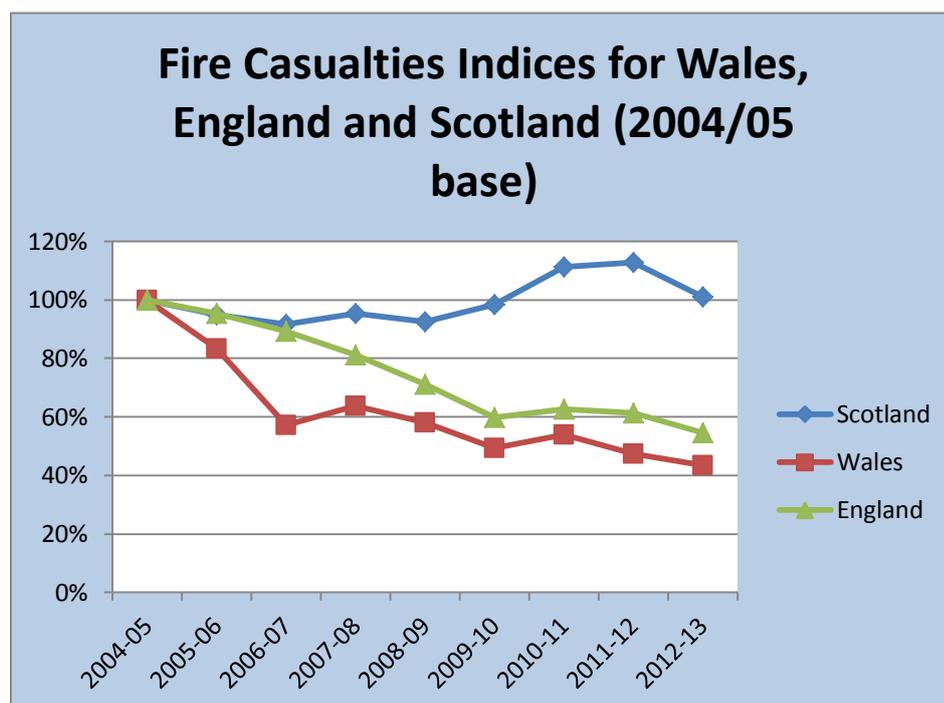


Fig. 5<sup>24</sup> - total numbers of fire casualties, Wales, England and Scotland<sup>25</sup>

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Scotland	1028	976	942	981	952	1011	1143	1159	1039
Wales	554	462	317	353	322	273	299	263	241
England	7519	7166	6715	6107	5353	4492	4703	4609	4104

In 2009 a study was carried out to look at why there are a disproportionately higher number of fire deaths and injuries in Scotland than in Wales and England<sup>26</sup>. A range of issues were identified, including: health issues, such as, high levels of alcohol consumption, smoking, and mental health; high levels of deprivation; high numbers of people living alone; ageing population; and a busy governance and community partnership landscape.

Whilst the consistent patterns of reduction in the numbers of fires in Wales, England and Scotland can be attributed to external factors, the focus on prevention activity in Wales, and the additional Welsh Government community safety funding provided to support it, may have been a factor in driving down the numbers of deaths and injuries in Wales.

The chart at figure 6, and table at figure 7, present the same data but per 10,000 of the population for Wales, England and Scotland. Overall, it demonstrates the numbers of casualties per 10,000 of the population have reduced in Wales to bring them broadly in line with the numbers in England.

<sup>24</sup> Scottish data from the National Statistics Publication for Scotland, (2013), *Fire Statistics Scotland 2012-13*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 05/11/2013. Welsh and English data from National Statistics, (2013), *Fire Statistics Monitor April 2012 to March 2013*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 05/11/2013

<sup>25</sup> Excludes precautionary checks and first aid. For definitions and further information please see Section 11 in the publication *Fire Statistics 2012-13* <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/fire-statistics/?lang=en>.

<sup>26</sup> Scotland Together: A study examining fire deaths in Scotland, Brian P Sweeney, Chief Fire Officer, 2009.

However, the FRAs in Wales started with higher numbers of fires per 10,000 population.

Fig. 6<sup>27</sup>

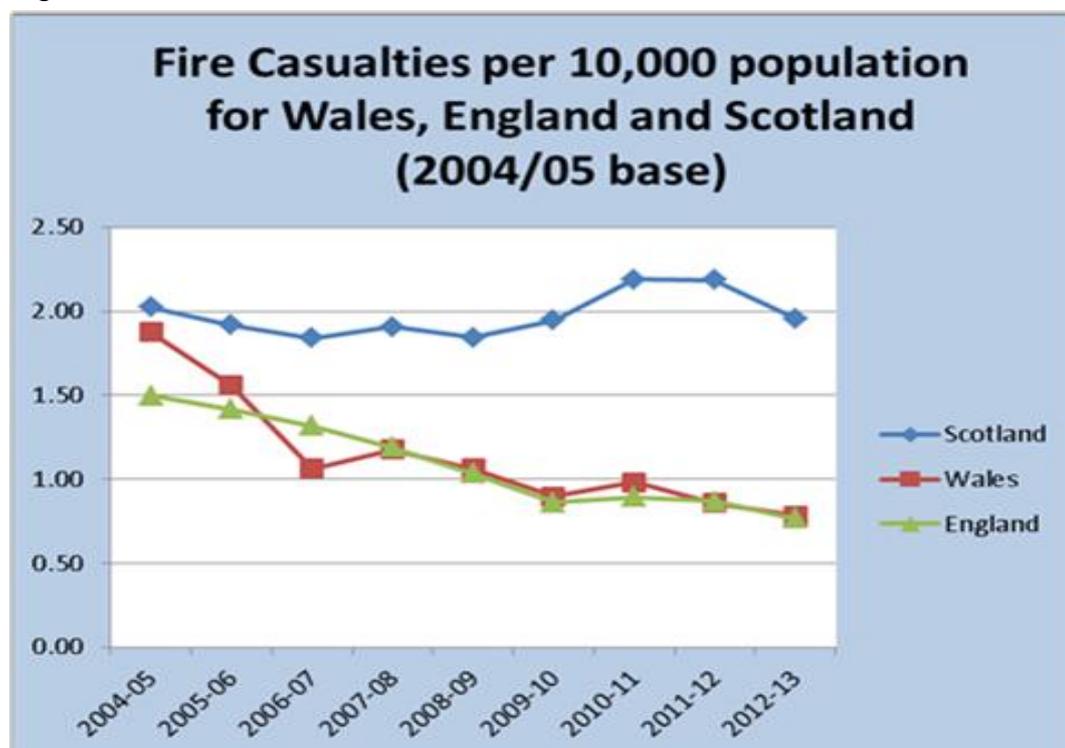


Fig. 7 – number of fire casualties per 10,000 population for Wales, England and Scotland.

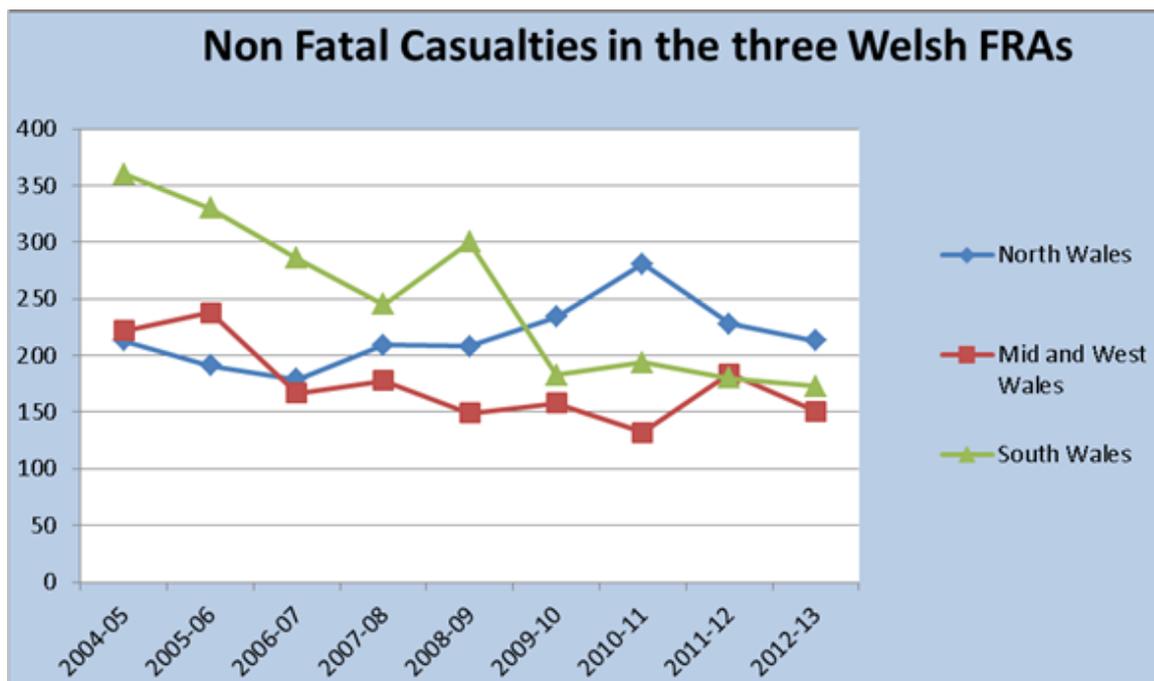
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Scotland	2.02	1.92	1.84	1.91	1.84	1.95	2.19	2.19	1.96
Wales	1.87	1.56	1.06	1.17	1.06	0.90	0.98	0.86	0.78
England	1.50	1.42	1.32	1.19	1.03	0.86	0.89	0.87	0.77

### Deaths and Casualties – FRAs in Wales

The chart at figure 8 compares the numbers of casualties, per FRA in Wales. It demonstrates greater reductions in non-fatal casualties in South Wales and Mid and West Wales, than in North Wales. In North Wales numbers of non-fatal casualties don't appear to have altered significantly over the period. North Wales FRA is continuing to explore possible reasons behind this anomaly, including potential differences in the way information is collected. However, to date they have not been able to explain the difference.

Fig. 8<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Excludes precautionary checks and first aid. For definitions and further information please see Section 11 in the publication Fire Statistics 2012-13 <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/fire-statistics/?lang=en>



### Deliberate fires

The numbers of deliberate fires (see table at figure 9) in Wales have greatly reduced since 2004/05, indicating the FRAs, and partners', arson intervention programmes have been successful.

Fig. 9<sup>29</sup> - number of deliberate fires, Wales

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Wales	19,792	17,747	19,551	17,971	13,524	12,908	14,296	10,647	6,394
North Wales	2,486	2,312	2,451	1,859	1,569	1,539	1,440	1,376	834
Mid and West Wales	4,728	4,135	4,547	4,152	3,205	2,830	3,282	2,425	1,494
South Wales	12,578	11,300	12,553	11,961	8,750	8,539	9,574	6,846	4,066

Whilst there has been a significant overall reduction in the number of deliberate fires in Wales, some parts of Wales still suffer from significantly higher levels of deliberate fire setting and arson than the UK average<sup>30</sup>.

The chart at figure 10, and table at figure 11, show the reductions in numbers of deliberate primary and secondary fires in Wales and England, per 10,000 population.

Fig. 10<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Includes precautionary checks and first aid. For definitions and further information please see Section 11 in the publication Fire Statistics 2012-13 <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/fire-statistics/?lang=en>

<sup>29</sup> Stats Wales

<sup>30</sup> Welsh Government Fire and Rescue Framework 2012 Onwards.

<sup>31,32,33</sup> Scottish: National Statistics Publication for Scotland, (2013), *Fire Statistics Scotland 2012-13*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 05/11/2013. English and Welsh: National Statistics, (2013), *Fire Statistics Monitor April 2012 to*

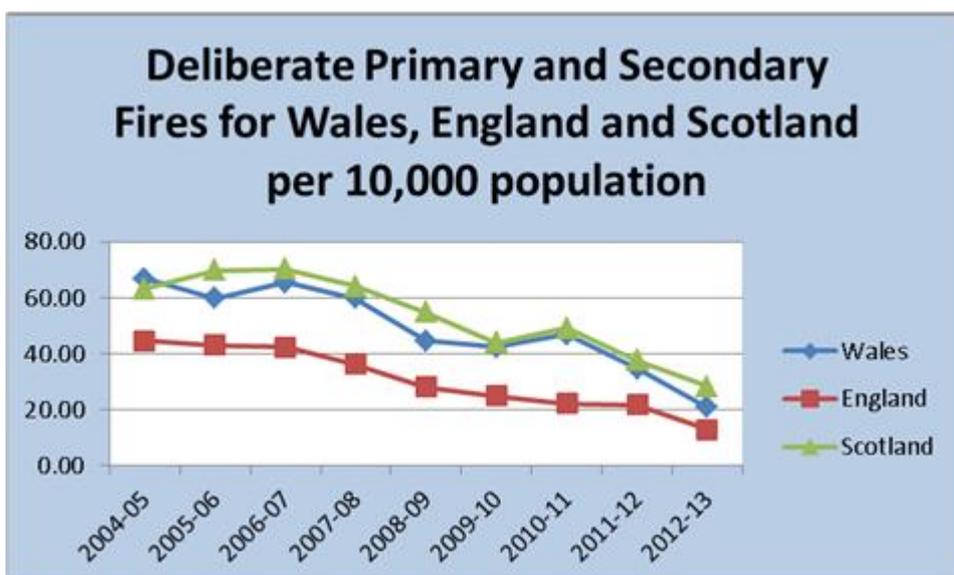


Fig. 11<sup>32</sup>– deliberate primary and secondary fires, Wales and England, per 10,000 population

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Wales	66.92	59.77	65.48	59.78	44.69	42.48	46.87	34.75	20.80
England	44.74	43.03	42.43	36.29	28.07	24.90	22.22	21.78	12.87
Scotland	63.32	69.78	70.15	64.18	54.93	44.07	49.19	37.71	28.34

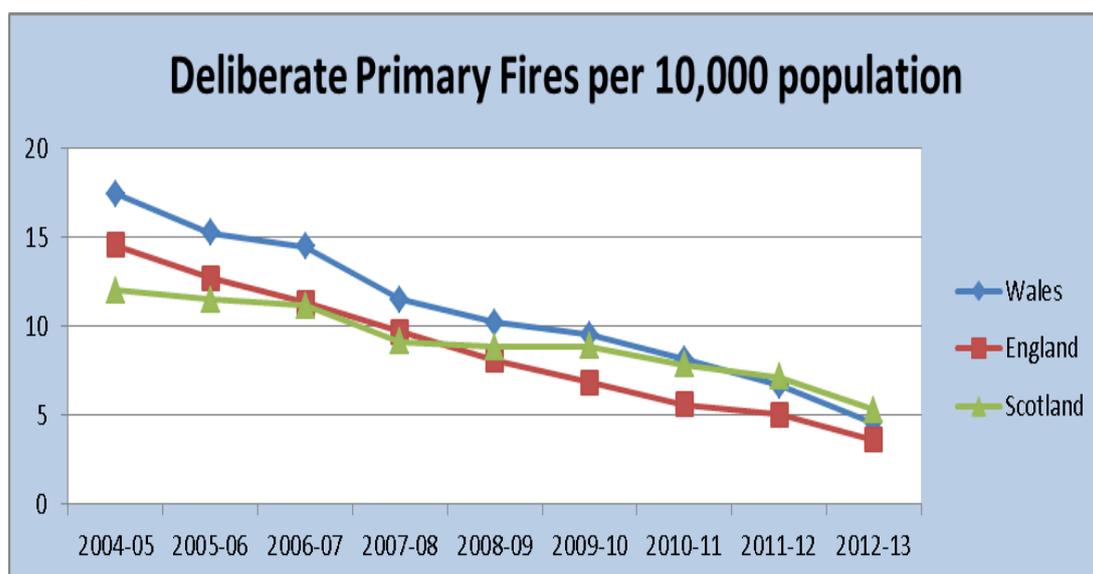
Comparable data was not available to make a comparison with Scotland on deliberate primary and secondary fires, but the table at figure 12, and chart at figure 13, show the numbers of deliberate primary fires only, per 10,000 of the population, for all three countries.

Fig. 12<sup>33</sup> – deliberate primary fires, number per 10,000 population

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
England	14.57	12.73	11.32	9.70	8.08	6.86	5.60	5.03	3.62
Wales	17.45	15.24	14.48	11.37	10.22	9.50	8.14	6.69	4.56
Scotland	12.02	11.52	11.14	9.15	8.85	8.88	7.83	7.14	5.31

March 2013, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 05/11/2013\*Minor revisions included to Wales data and population estimates provided by the Department for Finance and Corporate Services, Welsh Government.

Fig. 13<sup>34</sup> deliberate primary fires, per 10,000 population.



### False Alarms

In the previous National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services 2008-11, reference was made to the high resourcing impact of attending false alarms and set the expectation of FRAs working in partnership with businesses and other organisations to reduce hoax calls and unwanted signals. Despite this, progress in reducing the numbers of false alarms has not been as significant as in other areas of activity, as figures in the table at figure 14 suggest.

Fig. 14<sup>35</sup> – total numbers of false alarms, malicious and non-malicious

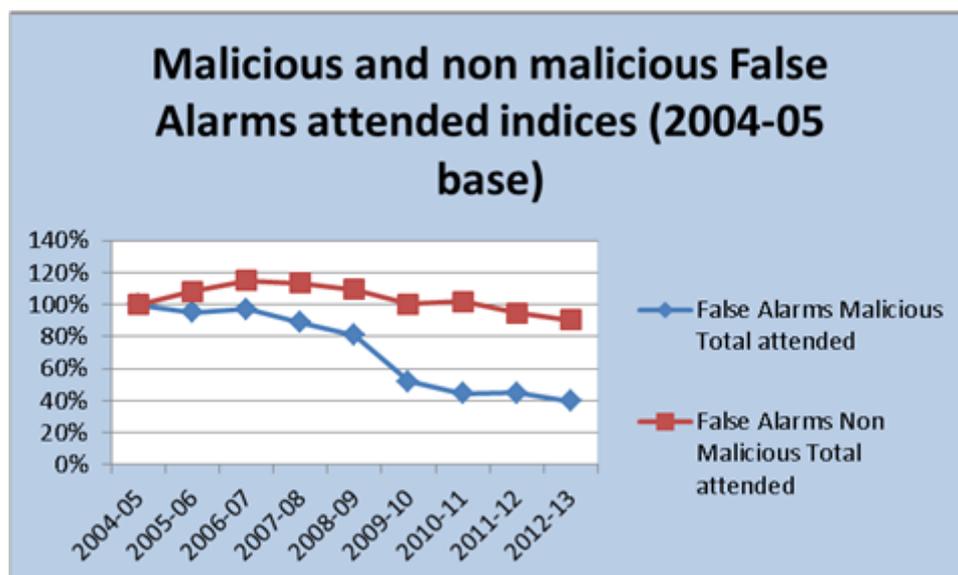
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Wales	17,662	18,901	19,993	19,598	18,855	16,901	17,006	15,874	15,083
North Wales	4,045	4,289	4,158	4,157	4,267	3,726	3,687	3,557	3,225
Mid and West Wales	4,563	4,954	5,297	5,193	5,267	5,255	4,937	4,407	4,423
South Wales	9,054	9,658	10,538	10,248	9,321	7,920	8,382	7,910	7,435

Activity to reduce the number of malicious false alarms has achieved greater results, yet the total numbers of non-malicious – including both good intent and faulty apparatus – have not reduced significantly, as the chart at fig. 15 indicates.

<sup>34</sup> Scottish: National Statistics Publication for Scotland, (2013), *Fire Statistics Scotland 2012-13*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 05/11/2013. English and Welsh: National Statistics, (2013), *Fire Statistics Monitor April 2012 to March 2013*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 05/11/2013 \*Minor revisions included to Wales data and population estimates provided by the Department for Finance and Corporate Services, Welsh Government.

<sup>35</sup> Welsh Government Stats Wales, (2013) *Community Safety*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 02/11/2013

Fig. 15<sup>36</sup>



The tables at figures 16 and 17 show the total numbers of malicious and non-malicious false alarms, respectively.

Fig. 16<sup>37</sup> - total number of malicious false alarms attended

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Wales	1,725	1,644	1,675	1,532	1,397	898	769	775	689
North Wales	271	237	164	154	169	137	114	129	105
Mid and West Wales	543	510	484	473	466	211	172	168	178
South Wales	911	897	1,027	905	762	550	483	478	406

Fig. 17<sup>38</sup> – total number of non-malicious false alarms attended – including good intent and faulty apparatus.

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Wales	15,937	17,257	18,318	18,066	17,458	16,003	16,237	15,099	14,394
North Wales	3,774	4,052	3,994	4,003	4,098	3,589	3,573	3,428	3,120
Mid and West Wales	4,020	4,444	4,813	4,720	4,801	5,044	4,765	4,239	4,245
South Wales	8,143	8,761	9,511	9,343	8,559	7,370	7,899	7,432	7,029

In discussions the FRSs indicated a numbers of challenges to making progress in reducing false alarms, including an ageing population with increasing numbers of fire alarms installed in homes, lack of effective management systems in parts of the public sector and increasing numbers of new buildings with additional detector heads installed.

A variety of activity is underway in each FRA area to tackle the issue of false alarms. Increasingly the FRAs have adopted a risk based approach to non-

<sup>36,37,38</sup> Welsh Government Stats Wales, (2013) *Community Safety*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 02/11/2013

attendance at non-life risk false alarms. The National Issues Committee has developed an All Wales Unwanted Fire Signals (UFS) Protocol, which has been agreed by all FRAs and was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013, with the intention of establishing a co-ordinated, consistent approach to dealing with UFS'. The FRAs invest considerable resources in working with other organisations to try and reduce the numbers of false alarms.

Despite this targeted activity, reductions have not been significant and challenges persist in addressing the issue. In parts of Wales, a significant number of false alarms originate from other public sector organisations. In South Wales the highest number stem from the healthcare sector. The cost implications of installing effective alarm systems and implementing effective management systems, in times of increasing financial constraint, are not seen as a priority. However, there are significant resource implications for the FRAs in responding to these false alarms, as well as to the organisations experiencing repeat false alarms, which have to fulfil fire regulation requirements in responding to the alarm.

Options are available to the FRAs to place a charge on, or take legal action against, organisations which repeatedly cause false alarms. However, these are resource intensive options which don't tackle the root cause of the problem.

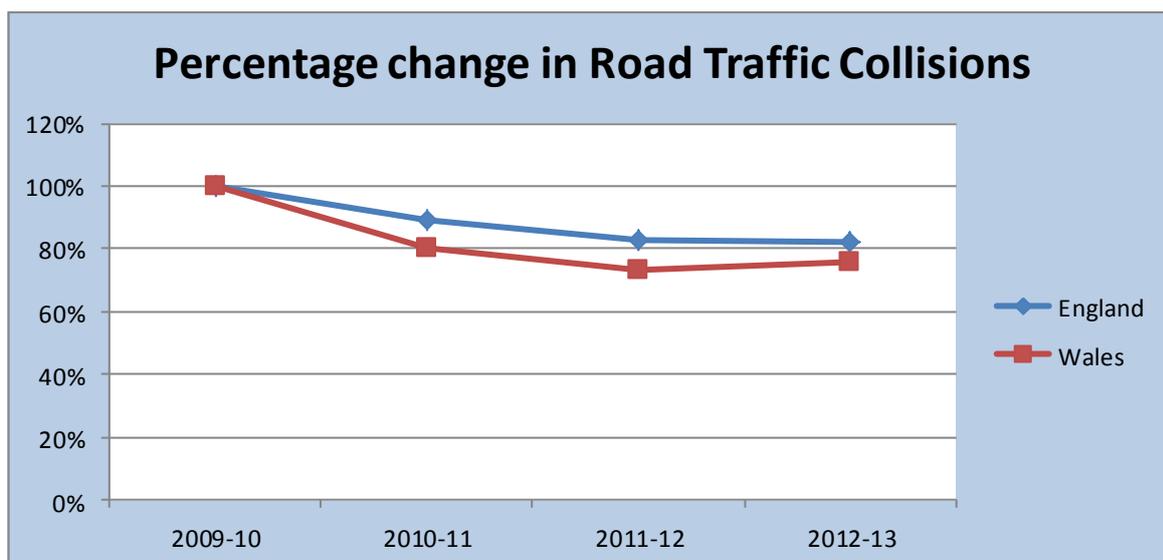
The FRAs indicated in discussions a more detailed breakdown of the numbers of false alarms per sector could be provided, and quantifying the costs to the FRAs in responding could also be obtained. This would enable the identification of areas for priority action, and a centrally coordinated drive to raise the profile of the issue in other sectors would help to identify how improvements can be made.

***Recommendation 1:*** It is recommended targeted action should be taken to tackle the impact of false alarms. A cross sector task and finish group be established to facilitate consideration of the issues relating to false alarms, to raise the profile of the issue in key sectors and galvanise action. In the first instance the group should look to provide enhanced information on the numbers of false alarms per sector, and the resource implications, to inform priority action.

## **Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)**

The FRAs have a duty to attend RTCs to rescue people and protect people from serious harm. As well as attending RTCs, the FRAs undertake a number of road safety initiatives designed to prevent accidents. The chart at figure 18 indicates there has been less progress made in reducing the numbers of RTCs compared with reductions in the numbers of fires, in both England and Wales, although the figures indicate slightly greater reductions in Wales.

Fig. 18<sup>39</sup>



Reductions in numbers of RTCs (see table at fig. 19) have occurred. In 2004/05 the FRSS attended 3,206 RTCs, compared with 2,635 in 2012/13, a reduction of 18%. In discussions the FRSS have pointed to a lack of direct ownership over all the factors influencing the downward trend as the reason for lower reductions. They are only one of a number of organisations with responsibilities in relation to road safety.

Fig. 19<sup>40</sup> - reductions in RTCs

Total – Wales	2004/05	2012/13	% change
RTCs attended	3,206	2,635	-18
Extrication of person/s	553	392	-29
Services rendered *	2,260	1,957	-13
Standby – no action	393	286	-27

\* includes 'advice given', 'making scene safe', 'making vehicle safe', 'medical assistance', 'release of person/s', 'wash down' and 'other'.

The Welsh Government Road Safety Framework 2013 states, whilst progress in improving road safety has been achieved, it has not gone far enough. It introduces challenging targets, and calls upon all partner organisations with a role in improving road safety to tailor their activities to reflect the objectives set out in the framework. It states activity should be based on robust data, and focus on reducing casualties. It stresses the need for partners to work together to achieve outcomes and calls on the introduction of results based accountability.

<sup>39</sup> National Statistics, (2013), *Fire Statistics Monitor April 2012 to March 2013*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 05/11/2013

<sup>40</sup> 2004-05 data collected via annual Operational data supplied directly by the FRSS on an annual basis - no longer collected so 2012-13 data taken from IRS.

The Framework sets three key targets, to be achieved by 2020, with interim targets to be reached by 2016. These targets, as compared with the average figures for Wales between 2004 and 2008, are a:

- 40% reduction in the total number of people killed and seriously injured (KSI) on Welsh roads;
- 25% reduction in the number of motorcyclists KSI, and a
- 40% reduction in the number of young people (aged 16 to 24) KSI.

It is clear the Welsh Government will not fund any activity which is not based on evidence, not subject to evaluation and not focused on achieving casualty improvements. It recognises the multitude of services which contribute to improved outcomes, and some duplication is inevitable, but emphasises the importance of working together more effectively and efficiently. The framework proposes a model of governance designed to best support more effective collaboration.

***Recommendation 2:*** It is recommended a series of actions are taken to improve road safety including prioritising Community Safety Grant funding in this area the review and strengthening the Fire and Rescue National Framework. Additionally, through RBA methodology effective mechanisms should be put in place to effectively measure the FRAs role in reducing RTCs.

## **5. How do they know how well they are doing?**

### **5.1. Performance management**

In managing their own performance, the FRAs use a variety of performance management processes which include integrated planning frameworks, performance measurement frameworks, appraisal systems, risk management frameworks, monitoring frameworks, Wales Programme for Improvement, Performance Audit & Scrutiny Committees.

Welsh Ministers set the strategic priorities and objectives for the FRAs, through the Fire and Rescue National Framework. Within the context of the National Framework, FRAs are responsible for determining their own priorities for improvement based on a thorough evidence based understanding of the communities they serve, local needs and their capacity to address them.

### **Improvement Planning**

Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, FRAs have statutory duties to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions, and to set improvement objectives on an annual basis. Under this Measure Welsh Government can specify performance standards and indicators and have done so in relation to FRAs in the Fire and Rescue Authorities (Performance Indicators) (Wales) Order 2011.

FRA performance is reported on an annual basis through their Annual Improvement Plans, where they are required to report on their performance in two stages:

- Plans and intentions – detailing an FRAs plans for achieving it's improvement objectives for the following year.
- Report on past performance – including an assessment of an FRAs performance for the previous year including, but not limited to, reporting against Performance Indicator's (as outlined in the Performance Indicator Framework).

The Annual Improvement Plans are audited by the Auditor General for Wales (AGW) on an annual basis. The Welsh Ministers are sent a copy of the report of the AGW. The AGW reports on how well the FRAs are planning for improvement, including consideration of their approach to measuring their performance.

In addition, FRA's under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, are required to use the improvement information they collect in order to compare their performance with their own historical performance in previous financial years and , as far as reasonably practicable, with other FRAs and other public authorities in Wales exercising similar functions.

### **Performance Measurement Framework**

The Performance Measurement Framework was issued by the Welsh Government in 2011, and includes:

- Statutory PIs: the national strategic priorities for FRAs based on the Welsh Government Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales 2012 Onwards.
- Core PIs: core measures (covering both corporate and operational issues)
- Local PIs: local measures.

Performance against these PIs must be publically reported upon as part of annual improvement plans. They are not altered frequently to ensure the availability of consistent data. They are high level, and it is for the FRAs to determine what additional local indicators they require. The PI framework is outcome based, where possible input/ output indicators have been removed but local PIs are still predominantly presented as activity data. FRAs have been working on introducing packages of PIs for different areas of activity; these are a combination of local indicators and outcomes. Developing enhanced standard performance management systems has been identified in the National Issues Committee (NIC) Annual Report (Oct 13) as a priority area for the year ahead.

### **All Wales Dwelling Fire Response Charter**

The Dwelling Fire Response Charter provides a framework for all three FRAs in Wales, setting out their prevention and response commitments to their communities and plans to achieve them. A common set of performance indicators and measures to monitor and account publicly for their own performance have been agreed by the FRAs.

### **Evaluation of prevention activity and links to improved outcomes**

The decrease in incidences of fires, and in the numbers of deaths and injuries as a result of fires, is often used to prove the value of prevention activity. In reality it is difficult to ascertain the extent of the impact of particular interventions on improving outcomes. External factors, such as social and lifestyle changes, have also played a part in reducing the numbers of fires.

In respect of Welsh Government Community Safety Grant Funding, this is now based on results based accountability principles, requiring a focus on the outcomes to be achieved and how they directly or indirectly improve safety in communities. These outcomes will be used to measure results.

### **RTCs and multi-agency outcomes**

The FRAs have raised concerns in relation to the requirement to demonstrate the contribution made to achieving certain improved outcomes on issues which the FRAs are not solely responsible for, such as RTCs where a large number of other organisations have a role. They claim it is often difficult to make direct correlations between the work undertaken and the outcomes achieved.

The Performance Measurement Framework does not include specific PIs relating to RTCs, for the reasons outlined. Instead it states:

The fire and rescue service in Wales respond to non-fire related incidents and also undertake a role in delivering a wider community safety message around prevention of such incidents. This is particularly the case for road traffic collisions (RTCs). However FRAs are not the lead agency responsible for preventing such incidents and are not always the lead agency for managing such incidents when they do occur. Whilst a FRA specific PI is not required, FRAs should reference performance information as reported nationally and their contribution to activity in this important area, in their annual improvement plans.

The FRAs should be able to identify themselves as a key partner, and put in place local PIs which reflect supporting – outcome and output – data. Data does exist, although it hasn't always been utilised.

## **5.2. Benchmarking**

Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 FRAs are required to use the improvement information they collect to compare their own performance against their historical performance, and, as far as is reasonable possible, against other FRAs, within and outside Wales, and public authorities exercising similar functions.

Benchmarking methods vary between FRAs. Historically the FRAs used family groups, although only family group 4<sup>41</sup> (of which South Wales FRA are still a member) is still in existence. When comparing performance with other members of a FRAs family group there were too many variables in how things were measured, and too many differences in local contexts, making it difficult to ascribe their relative position with any level of certainty to anything they had done.

South Wales still use family group 4, although they caution around drawing too many conclusions as the group is becoming more diverse and it is becoming less practical to compare.

There is little evidence of effective benchmarking, despite repeated calls by the WAO in Annual Improvement Reports to improve on this.

**Recommendation 3:** It is recommended the review of the Welsh Government Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 Onwards places emphasis on the importance of benchmarking and considers how FRAs might overcome the challenges identified, drawing on the expertise of the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor.

### **5.3 Audit and Assurance Arrangements**

#### **Local Audit Arrangements**

Each FRA also has its own internal audit arrangements in place. They each have a committee, with slightly different remits, established with responsibility for overseeing internal and external audit programmes.

#### **South Wales FRA – Finance, Audit and Performance Management Committee**

The Finance, Audit and Performance Management Committee oversees the FRA's effective and efficient deployment of resources, including the financial reporting process. It also reviews and approves the internal audit programme and manages the relationship with external auditors.

#### **Mid and West Wales FRA – Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee**

The Performance Audit and Scrutiny Committee (PAS) is responsible for demonstrating each FRAs commitment to efficient and effective deployment of public resources and the attainment of performance targets. The scrutiny function is discharged by the Scrutiny Working Group, predominantly comprised of Members of the PAS Committee, which meets around four times a year and feeds back to PAS.

All areas of the FRA are scrutinised over a four year rolling programme. Outcomes from these exercises are communicated to PAS Committee and

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<sup>41</sup> Family group 4 consists of: South Wales, Avon, Cheshire, Cleveland, Derbyshire, Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Humberside, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire and Surrey.

the full FRA, with recommendations being captured and reported within the organisations business assurance process.

### North Wales FRA – Audit Committee

The Committee has four primary roles of:

- Governance audit and scrutiny;
- financial and resource management audit and scrutiny;
- risk management and assurance audit and scrutiny; and,
- performance audit and scrutiny.

### **Operational Assurance of Service Delivery**

Operational Assurance of Service Delivery (OASD) was introduced to the Welsh FRAs in 2006. Previously, inspections were carried out by Her Majesty’s Fire Service Inspectorate. These inspections ended in 2001. OASD was introduced as, across the UK, it was felt there was a gap in the inspection process which the Audit Commission in England and the Wales Audit Office in Wales could not fill because of a lack of operational expertise. The process covers key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) covering community risk management, prevention, protection, response, health and safety, training and development and call management and incident support.

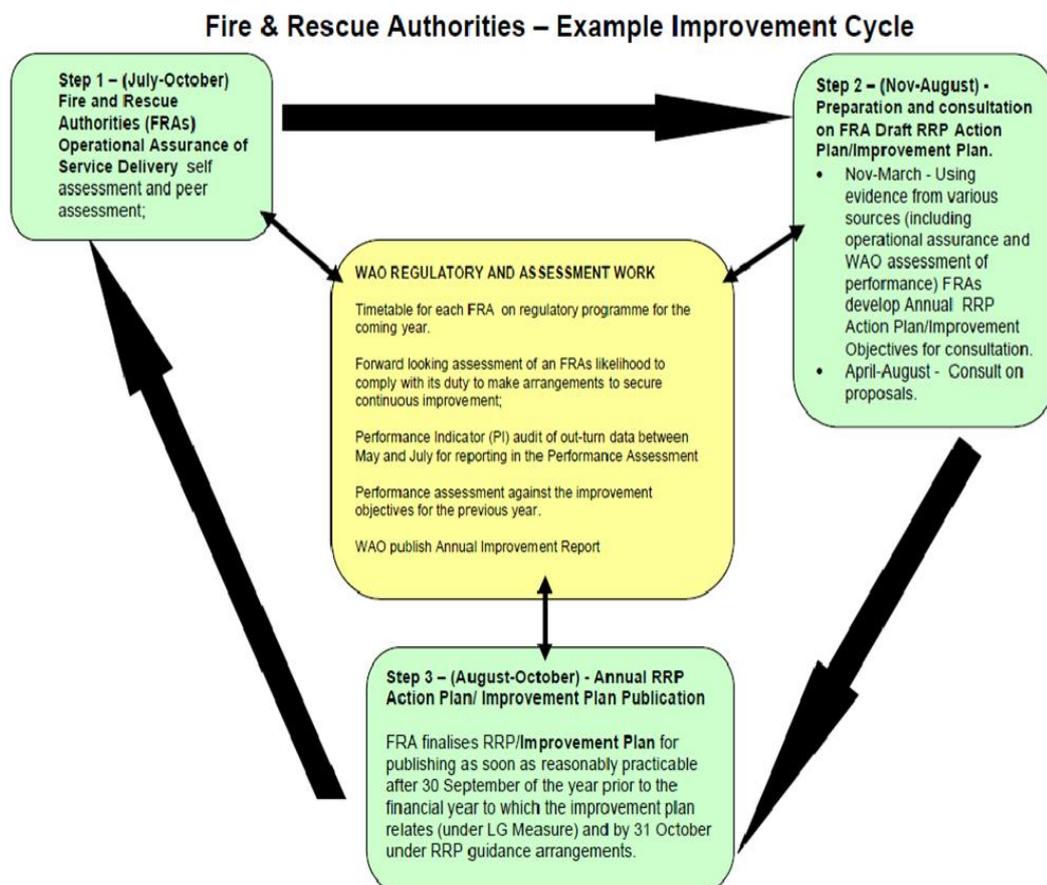
OASD is undertaken by the FRAs, supported by the Welsh Government. The Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser reviews the reports on each FRA and provides an overview to the Minister. It is a cyclical process whereby one or two KLOEs are reviewed each year. An assessment is also undertaken of the FRAs progress or “Direction of Travel” against previous recommendations made by the peer team. The assessment process requires each FRA to carry out a self assessment against a centrally provided framework. Each FRA’s Self Assessment is validated through a peer review conducted by a team, led by the Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, and consisting of sector competent officers from the other FRAs in Wales. Welsh Government officials and the WAO support and observe the process. Observations and recommendations made were designed to further enhance and develop the existing policies and procedures.

OASD is referenced in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 - Part 1 Guidance to FRAs as one of the sources of information/ evidence available to both FRAs and the Wales Audit Office, as part of the improvement planning process. The Guidance anticipates:

- FRAs use the information as part of their self assessment process to:
  - Report on their progress in the previous year.
  - Support the development of their improvement objectives.
- WAO use the information as part of their corporate and performance assessment processes.
- Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor uses the information to report to the Minister and provide assurance around operational abilities.

Figure 20<sup>42</sup> shows where the OASD process fits into the improvement planning cycle.

Fig 20



The Welsh Government's Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 Onwards, cites OASD as a key element of the improvement process. It concludes the FRAs should continue to support this assessment process. Feedback from Welsh Government policy officials, who have been involved in the process, cited several benefits of the process of the Welsh Government's involvement, including:

- injecting objectivity, consistency and fairness into the process;
- providing quality assurance; and,
- developing audit and assessment expertise amongst Welsh Government officials.

The OASD process has recently been cited by the WAO, in their study of Local Improvement Planning and Reporting in Wales, as an example of good practice. The report states the WAO:

<sup>42</sup> Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 – Guidance to FRAs

“found encouraging evidence of some authorities taking determined action in response to the evidenced findings of audit and inspection. For example; the three fire and rescue authorities’ Peer Assessment Team reviewed all of the authorities’ self-assessments in order to assess the ‘direction of travel’ in implementing areas for improvement identified in previous peer assessment reviews, and in each case noted progress”.

The previous Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser looked at the OASD process in May 2013 and concluded it was resource intensive, and elements of the process cross over into some of the corporate work of the WAO. He concluded a simpler and more effective model would be to continue with the identification of key areas for exploration, followed by self assessments by FRAs. The FRAs could then provide the peer assessment (as they have always done for Health and Safety reviews), and the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and WAO could offer ‘spot checks’ to ensure additional rigour in the process.

He also concluded the FRAs would need to determine the benefits to them from the OASD process and further consideration would need to be given by the new Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser. The OASD process was suspended in 2013/14 pending the conclusions of this report.

During discussions with the FRSs relating to this project and report, officers stated the OASD process is a highly valuable process, providing assurance to the FRAs. Officials in the Fire and Armed Forces Branch perceive there is a value to the FRAs, the WAO and the Welsh Government to the continuation of the process, but consideration needs to be given to where this particular process provides assurances not provided elsewhere. The resource implications will also need to be considered in the current financial climate.

**Recommendation 4:** The Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser for Wales to be tasked with reviewing the current audit/inspection process with the WAO and advise the Minister as to next steps. Views from the FRAs to be taken into account within this review.

### **Wales Audit Office**

Independent audit of the use of public funds is an essential component of democratic accountability. Public sector audit covers regularity, propriety and value for money. In doing so it provides assurance around the governance and stewardship of public money and assets, offers insight on the extent to which resources are used wisely to meet public need, and identifies and promotes ways in which public services can be improved.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2005 (which are made under the 2004 Act) provide the regulatory regime underpinning the financial reporting and accounting of FRAs. Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, the Auditor General for Wales

(AGW) is required to undertake an annual improvement audit and assessment for each FRA. On an annual basis the AGW is also required, under section 13 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004, to audit the accounts of each FRA.

The Wales Audit Office (WAO) undertakes a cycle of audit work in relation to FRAs, including:

- Annual Improvement Reports.
- Annual audit of each FRAs accounts.
- 'Assessment of performance' audits.
- Data Quality Reviews.
- Cyclical programme of more in depth reviews of specific corporate activities.
- Programme of improvement studies across LAs.
- National study each year.

### Annual Improvement Reports

As noted earlier in this report, each year the AGW is required to produce and publish annual improvement reports on each of the FRAs in Wales. The WAO Annual Improvement reports, published in 2013, found, in general, each FRA made progress in 2011/12 in delivering improvements and this could be demonstrated by reductions in numbers of fires, casualties and RTCs. However, they also identified some areas of concern:

- In South Wales the number of deliberate fires remained a concern. The numbers of RTCs remained broadly the same, and whilst casualties decreased the number of fatal and serious accidents within priority groups of young drivers and motorcyclists increased.
- In Mid and West Wales the slight increase in the level of injuries sustained in fires and the number of fatal and serious RTCs remains an area for future focus.

The WAO concluded each FRAs is managing their improvement programme well, but:

- in South Wales public reporting of performance is not as clear as it could be
- in Mid and West Wales public reporting of performance is not as comprehensive and clear as it could be; and
- in North Wales not enough is done to compare its performance to other, similar bodies.

The reports concluded each FRA was likely to comply with the requirement to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in 2012-13, although they stated Mid and West Wales are likely to face ongoing challenges in implementing its planned changes to services.

More detailed information on each of the WAO reports' summary findings can be found at Annex F.

### Performance Assessment Audits

The WAO also conducts 'assessment of performance' audits on an annual basis, in which they review each FRA's Performance Assessment, conducted as part of the improvement planning process. They interview managers, review supporting documents and test the reliability of performance information. The findings are summarised and shared with the FRAs, but also inform the WAO Annual Improvement Reports. Data Quality Reviews are conducted to assess accuracy of performance information.

### Other reviews

The WAO also have a cyclical programme of more in depth reviews of specific aspects of corporate activities of the FRAs in Wales. In 2013-14 they are reviewing aspects of HR. They conduct improvement studies across all LAs, sometimes focusing on FRAs. In addition they also conduct one national study each year, which involves work with selected Authorities and other public bodies, and culminates in a detailed national report. In 2013 they have also been asked by the FRAs to review the National Issues Committee (NIC) and collaboration and partnership arrangements.

In their written responses to the Commission on Public Sector Governance and Delivery (the Commission) in the summer of 2013, the FRAs made the following points in relation to the current audit arrangements:

- audit requirements under the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) are a burden on resources;
- prescriptive guidelines for identifying strengths and weaknesses in relation to the WPI are a limitation, as they do not always inform the FRAs about how well the service has been delivered from the users' perspective;
- objectivity and understanding of the sector are beneficial to the process; and,
- current audit and assurance arrangements do not appear to provide complete assurance to Welsh Government Ministers around accountability for funding provided.

The same points were raised during discussions around the project, focusing in the main on the resource intensive nature of arrangements and the perceived lack of high level of assurance for Ministers.

Whilst rationalisation of current arrangements could drive a more focused and efficient system, much of the activity is driven by current legislative requirements.

There is currently a requirement under section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 for the auditor, auditing an FRA's accounts, to be satisfied the FRA have made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and

effectiveness in its use of resources<sup>43</sup>. Including a statement on value for money (VFM) in the AGW's audit of accounts could provide the high level of assurance around value for money which Ministers, and Accounting Officers, require.

Like in Wales, in England,<sup>44</sup> as part of the audit of the statement of accounts of an FRA, it is also a requirement for the appointed auditor to be satisfied the FRA has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Code of Practice issued by the Audit Commission in England goes further to require the appointed auditor to report their conclusion on these arrangements which is referred to as the VFM judgement. Consideration is needed of the implications of a poor VFM judgement, and the possible actions which could be taken, particularly under current funding and governance arrangements which are indirect and complex (governance and funding arrangements are explored in more detail later in the report).

**Recommendation 5:** The Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and the WAO to consider whether and how a Value for Money judgement could be included in the AGW annual consideration of Statement of Accounts. It should also assess the benefits, costs, limitations and legal implications of including such a judgment.

## **6. VFM in a Changing Landscape**

In light of the current, unprecedented reductions in funding, public sector organisations are increasingly being required to demonstrate they are providing VFM.

### **6.1. Current Funding Arrangements**

The funding of the FRAs is governed by the Combination Scheme Orders<sup>45</sup> in respect of each FRA made under the Fire Services Act 1947<sup>46</sup>. The Orders set out the expenses the FRAs shall be paid out of a Combined Fire Service Fund, constituted and administered in accordance with the provisions in Part IV of the Orders. The Combined Fire Services Fund for each FRA is made up of contributions from each constituent Authority of the relevant FRA. The

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<sup>43</sup> This provision was amended by the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013 but the amendment does not come into force until 1 April 2014. The effect of the amendment is that the Auditor General for Wales ("the AGW") will be the auditor of FRAs rather than there being a duty on the AGW to appoint auditors, and therefore the requirement in section 17 will apply to the AGW in auditing the accounts of FRAs.

<sup>44</sup> This is required under the Code of Practice issued by the Audit Commission under section 4 of the Audit Commission Act 1998. It requires appointed auditors to report their conclusion on the audited body's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources which is often referred to as the value for money judgment.

<sup>45</sup> The North Wales Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1995 (S.I. 1995/3218); the Mid and West Wales Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1995 (S.I. 1995/3229); and the South Wales Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1995 (S.I. 1995/3230).

<sup>46</sup> This Act was repealed by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 but existing combination scheme orders, including those set out above, were saved by virtue of section 4 of the 2004 Act.

contributions are calculated by reference to the estimated new expenditure of the FRA and the population of each constituent Authority.

As set out above, the majority of funding for FRAs is provided through contributions sought by each FRA from its constituent LA. The remainder comes from income an FRA generates and funding direct from the Welsh Government, via the Community Fire Safety Grant.

LAs finance their contribution through a combination of council tax income and Revenue Support Grant (RSG). For each service area funded via the RSG, Standard Spending Assessments (SSAs) are calculated per LA, based upon a range of factors as determined by an agreed formula. The formula is reviewed regularly by the joint Welsh Government and LA working group, the Distribution Sub Group. LA representation on the Distribution Sub Group is agreed through the WLGA. The formula covers the main spending areas, including education, social services, fire, transport and other services.

In the case of provision of funding for fire services, the SSA is calculated on a simple formula based purely on projected population:  $1.000 \times \text{Population}$ , all ages (projected). Calculations of SSAs for each service area are indicative only, and the ability of LAs to set their own spending priorities remains an important part of the RSG distribution system. Thus the contributions sought by the FRAs from their constituent LAs have the potential to bear little resemblance to the SSA allocations, which is consistent with the principle of services being determined locally. Unlike in England, where FRAs can set council tax precepts, in Wales FRAs are not precepting bodies.

It is difficult to evidence the extent to which the FRAs influence and change the budget proposals, and in turn the role played by LAs on the FRAs when seeking contributions. Each FRA has a different process for developing the proposed budget to be agreed. A mixture of formal and informal consultation takes place between Officers and Members of the FRA, and the LA Scrutiny Committees.

In North Wales budget setting is carried out through informal meetings of the Improvement Planning Working Group, usually with similar membership to the Executive Panel (which deals with the appointment of senior officers, disciplinary and pension matters, certain audit matters and other issues as the need arises). Formal recording of proposals takes place at the Executive Panel and once approved the proposed budget is then presented to the full FRA. The NW FRA Treasurer consults with LA Treasurers. Briefings are also provided to LA scrutiny committees.

In South Wales the budget is developed by overlaying requirements with assumptions made in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and settlement projections from Welsh Government and the WLGA. Senior management and the Finance, Asset Management and Performance Working Group scrutinise proposals. Further scrutiny is undertaken by the Finance, Asset Management and Performance Committee who recommend the full budget requirement to

the full FRA. Engagement with LAs takes place on an officer to officer basis, with minimal Member consultation.

In Mid and West Wales informal consultation takes place with LAs to understand pressures facing both organisations, before the FRA, and relevant working groups and committees, consider proposals.

## 6.2. Funding Profiles

Current funding arrangements for FRAs do not appear to indicate significant reductions in funding, despite the economic challenges facing all parts of the public sector and in light of significant reductions in the numbers of fires.

Fig. 21<sup>47</sup>

Revenue Budgets	2004-05 £000	2005-06 £000	2006-07 £000	2007-08 £000	2008-09 £000	2009-10 £000	2010-11 £000	2011-12 £000	2012/13 £000
<b>Total Wales</b>	124,947	135,310	141,728	138,959	142,663	145,788	148,732	146,777	145,830
<b>Mid and West Wales</b>	38,748	40,318	42,724	41,417	42,537	43,644	44,398	43,687	43,470
<b>North Wales</b>	26,852	27,952	29,350	29,456	30,338	31,312	32,093	31,933	31,772
<b>South Wales</b>	59,346	67,040	69,654	68,086	69,788	70,832	72,241	71,157	70,588

Figure 21 shows the funding profile for the FRAs for the period 2004/05 until 2012/13. Using Treasury GDP deflators the 2004/05 expenditure of £124.9 million would equate to £151.4 million at 2012/13 outturn prices. This figure is greater than the actual expenditure for 2012/13, of £145.8 million. This equates to a real terms reduction of approximately 3.7% over the period.

Using the budget allocation figures for 2004/05 (contained in the funding profiles table at fig. 21), and using GDP deflators, to calculate 2012/13 outturn prices, the FRAs have made the following real term reductions:

- Mid and West Wales – 7.4%
- North Wales – 2.4%
- South Wales – 1.9%

Each FRA has a different approach to budget setting, which accounts in part for the different levels of reductions. The drop in 2007/08 in South and Mid and West Wales was as a result of changes to pensions which impacted on all FRA budgets, but particularly these two FRAs. South Wales appears to have had a large increase in budget from 2004/05 to 2005/06, which skews the percentages. Calculating South Wales 2005/06 expenditure, at 2012/13 outturn prices, equates to a 11.5% reduction in real terms.

### Experience elsewhere

<sup>47</sup> Approved revenue budget figures, excluding capital and Welsh Government grants, provided by each FRS.

In England the FRAs receive their funding from two principle sources: via a central Government grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government, and via precepting. The Local Government Association (LGA), in September 2012, estimated during the period of the current spending review, from 2011/12 to 2014/15 FRAs in England will have seen cuts in central Government grant of around 25%<sup>48</sup>.

Sir Ken Knight was commissioned by the UK Government to undertake a review of efficiencies and operations in FRAs in England. His report, *Facing the Future*, was published in May 2013. In terms of cost per head of population, *Facing the Future* stated, in 2011/12, the average spend per head in English FRAs was £38 per head<sup>49</sup>. In 2011/12 the cost per head in Wales was<sup>50</sup>:

- North Wales FRA cost per head - £45.
- South Wales FRA cost per head - £47.
- Mid and West Wales FRA cost per head - £51.

By comparison with the English FRAs<sup>51</sup>, these costs place all three Welsh FRAs in the upper quartile of FRAs in England and Wales. The FRAs in Wales have a largely rural demographic, and provision of response services in a rural area presents specific challenges, however benchmarking and value for money recommendations outlined earlier will help inform future decisions. Sir Ken Knight found no evidence of a correlation between cost per head and the population density in an area. He also compared them by family group, and found the spread of expenditure remained.<sup>52</sup>

It was not possible to include data relating to specific comparable FRAs in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, due to Welsh Government not having a licence for the use of Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountability (CIPFA) data. However, this data is available.

### **6.3. Planning for risk**

In ensuring an effective frontline response, FRAs must consider the level of risk, the geography and demographics of their area. Each FRA has their own system for determining the risk in their area, and the resources required to ensure the appropriate level of response. These systems typically combine the use of incident – and other – data, computer modelling (MOSAIC and FSEC), overlaid with professional judgement and expertise. Different approaches have evolved in response to different risks in each area. The National Issues Committee (outlined in more detail on page 54) has begun work to standardise approaches to the formulation and sharing of risk information. A standard approach to the formulation of Operational Tactical

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<sup>48</sup> Local Government Association briefing to Westminster Hall debate on the funding of fire and rescue services, 5 September 2012.

<sup>49</sup> *Facing the Future*: findings from the review of efficiencies and operations in fire and rescue authorities in England, Sir Ken Knight, 17 May 2013.

<sup>50</sup> WAO Annual Improvement Reports.

<sup>51</sup> Compared with data included in Sir Ken Knight's report.

<sup>52</sup> *Facing the Future*, Sir Ken Knight, 17 May 2013

Plans, designed to address risk management and planning at higher risk sites, has been developed.

All three Welsh FRAs have undertaken, or are in the process of undertaking, reviews of the fire cover required to ensure the most appropriate distribution of resources. Success in reducing the numbers of fires, and in the numbers of casualties, suggests the FRAs have robust risk profiling mechanisms in place, and they are utilising them to balance the requirement to effectively respond to incidences in a time of changing demographics and reducing budgets without compromising the risk to individuals or firefighters.

#### **6.4. Prevention activity**

‘...prevention not only saves lives, it also has the potential to provide sustainable cost reductions because as risk recedes this releases operational resources.’ – Local Government Group, Fire and Rescue Services: going the extra mile – March 2011.

As numbers of fires have reduced, the nature of the core work of the FRAs has changed. There has increasingly been a focus on preventing fires, and RTCs, from occurring. Over the last ten years approximately £50 million of community fire safety grant funding has been invested by the Welsh Government in prevention activity in Wales, and this has supported the drive on prevention activity. Currently prevention activity is planned on the basis of those most at risk and targeted at vulnerable groups.

In their evidence to the project, Mid and West Wales FRS stressed the success of the investment in fire prevention work over the last 10 years, claiming it has resulted in the reduction of fire incidents and associated deaths and injuries. They believe it has resulted in:

‘the potential to reduce staff at stations by altering the crewing methods, together with a reduction in costs. Prevention work has therefore been a form of ‘Invest to Save’, something which is entirely consistent with Welsh Government current thinking around strategies in other public service areas. This prevention work has historically been funded by direct Welsh Government Grants.’<sup>53</sup>

During the course of discussions with each FRS, difficulties in planning for prevention activity linked to uncertainty over future grant funding were alluded to. The Welsh Government’s Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 Onwards states the FRAs are expected to demonstrate the impact of their work. Moving forward the FRAs need to consider how activity will be fully embedded into core business, and not reliant on separate funding streams. Given the current financial situation facing the public sector the FRAs increasingly need to focus on maximising the targeting and prioritisation of activity, and robust evaluation to ensure results are achieved with less. There needs to be a focus on forward planning and ensuring an effective response to future challenges.

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<sup>53</sup> Mid and West Wales comments on the Activity Information Paper collated during the project, July 2013.

**Recommendation 6:** It is recommended the FRAs consider how they can sustainably embed prevention into core business so it is less reliant on external factors.

### 6.5. Realignment of resources

In discussions, each area alluded to changes to their workforce which have taken place to reflect changing levels of risk and the increased focus on prevention. Crewing systems have changed over the period, driven by the FRAs risk profiling processes, to ensure an appropriate level of response service for a reduced level of risk. In some FRA areas, and for some areas of activity, there has been a move from the use of operational staff undertaking prevention activity, to cheaper non-operational staff.

Fig. 22<sup>54</sup>

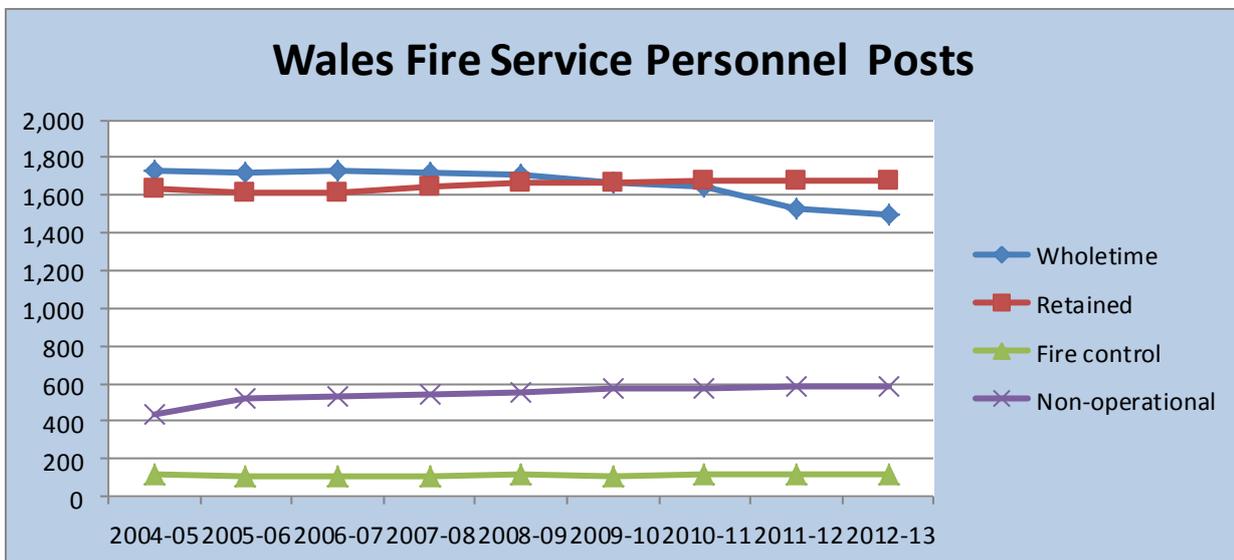


Fig. 23<sup>55</sup>

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Wholetime	1,727	1,721	1,727	1,718	1,706	1,665	1,645	1,528	1,501
Retained	1,634	1,615	1,615	1,649	1,666	1,665	1,677	1,680	1,680
Fire control	117	110	107	107	116	108	113	113	113
Non-operational	432	526	533	539	552	573	577	583	580

The chart and table, at figures 22 and 23, appear to demonstrate an overall reduction of around 13% in the number of whole time fire fighters; a 3% increase in Retained Duty Staff; and, an increase of 34% in non-operational staff between 2004/05 and 2012/13.

However, one FRS stated caution is required in relation to these figures, as each area records their workforce figures differently. This lack of consistency

<sup>54,55</sup> Welsh Government Stats Wales, (2013) *Community Safety*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 02/11/2013

makes comparisons challenging, and it is difficult to accurately determine the extent to which the FRAs have realigned themselves to changing risk levels.

***Recommendation 7:*** It is recommended the inconsistencies in data recording relating to staffing are addressed to facilitate access to accurate and comparable data for the purpose of benchmarking.

## **6.6. Public Engagement**

The FRAs are required to consult with the public in relation to the development of improvement plans. In their Annual Improvement Reports, published in spring 2013, the WAO have reported each FRA demonstrates a strong commitment to public engagement, as noted above they made recommendations to all three FRAs around improving their approach. In each areas they have recommended a more strategic, co-ordinated approach, and more evaluation of engagement activities.

As outlined above, the changing landscape of fire risk is driving required changes in staffing levels and locations. Proposed changes often meet with strong local opposition, which provides a challenge to the FRAs. Critical to overcoming these challenges is effective consultation with the public around planned changes to improve understanding, overcoming fears and concerns, and gain local support.

Mid and West Wales FRA recognise effective public engagement has been a challenge and are developing mechanisms for evaluating the impact of their community safety engagement activities. As part of their improvement planning for 2013/14, they considered the WAO's recommendations in planning for consultation and engagement activity. They have employed an evaluation officer. They are consulting on their improvement objectives for 2014/15, which include one around improving evaluation processes.

In their 2013/14 Improvement Plan, South Wales FRA included an improvement objective around engaging with communities. They have seconded an officer from the WAO to advise on the strategy, evaluation, training and resources required. This officer provided advice on how to engage with the public on their recent Fire Cover Review, and they have since undertaken numerous engagement and consultation sessions with communities and partners.

North Wales FRA ran a 12 week consultation on their 2013/14 Annual Improvement Plan.

## **6.7. Structure**

The structure of FRAs has been the subject of examination in other parts of the UK in the past two years.

A review of the structure of the fire and rescue services in Scotland led to reorganisation in April 2013, and the merger of the previous eight FRAs into

one single fire service. The new national Scottish FRS is governed by a ministerially appointed Board. The aim of the reorganisation in Scotland was to drive efficiencies and improved outcomes.

As already alluded to in section 6.2, Sir Ken Knight's review, *Facing the Future*, examined efficiencies and operations of the FRAs in England. The UK Government response to the review is expected imminently.

During the project there was no desire to suggest the current structure of the FRAs in Wales is problematic. With only three FRAs in Wales, they operate on a larger scale than in England, or in Scotland, prior to the reorganisation. There are some areas of inconsistency across the three FRAs in Wales which sometimes leads to issues. However, at this stage it is likely these issues can be overcome through closer partnership working and potentially through the National Issues Committee as a vehicle for collaboration.

As outlined in more detail in the section on Strategic Partnerships on pages 56-57, in South and Mid and West Wales the FRAs face a challenge in engaging effectively with the range of local and regional partnerships within their boundaries, as currently constituted. A smaller number of FRAs would exacerbate this issue. Increasing the number of FRAs could potentially solve the issue of a lack of co-terminosity in parts of Wales. However, these issues can be considered in the wider context of the Williams' Commission and public service reform.

## **7. Driving Greater VFM**

### **7.1. Collaboration**

FRAs collaborate in a number of different ways, and with a number of different organisations, on a daily basis. They collaborate with each other, to provide response services across boundaries, to ensure consistency of service delivery and drive efficiencies. They collaborate with other emergency services, to provide a response and explore opportunities for efficiencies and improvement. They collaborate with other sectors and organisations in providing services. They also collaborate and engage with other public, private and voluntary sector services on a regional basis to ensure consistency of strategic direction and drive efficiencies.

Collaboration can be complex when dealing with different aims and objectives, cultures, geographical landscapes and processes, all of which bring specific challenges. Whilst its recognised delivery of response services requires the flexibility to be locally determined, the FRAs frequently work together across boundaries to provide response services, and to drive the prevention agenda. This often involves collaboration with other emergency services and organisations.

### **National Issues Committee (NIC)**

To drive further collaboration in the provision of prevention activities and administrative support services, the FRAs established the National Issues Committee in 2012, with a programme of work across 6 work streams. The FRAs advise the NIC is making progress, which has been driven by close partnership working and communication.

The NIC Annual Report, published in October 2013, indicates:

- Key progress has been made since the NIC was established to strengthen relationships and the mechanisms for working collectively across the three FRAs. This is a real achievement, an important stepping stone and the arrangement bodes well for the future.
- The NIC appears to be making some small tangible efficiency gains.
- The NIC are working towards achieving savings of £3.1m to be realised over 5 years (£0.62m p.a). Based on a total revenue budget for all three FRAs in 2012/13 of £145.8m, savings of £0.62m would amount to 0.4% p.a.
- The NIC will be considering further savings which can be achieved.

The current financial situation facing the public sector will require greater efficiencies to be achieved. While progress appears to have been made in overcoming differences and cultural barriers, progress against actual efficiencies appears to have been much slower. In the next year much greater progress against the work streams would be expected. The NIC should look to consider evidence and experiences of the efficiencies and improvements made by organisations elsewhere.

**Recommendation 8:** The NIC should look at efficiency savings elsewhere to share learning and drive greater reductions. The Welsh Government's Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor could provide advice and share experiences of savings made elsewhere in the UK.

### **Shared support services**

Discussions with the FRSs indicated a barrier to greater collaboration on shared administrative and support functions is a lack of standardised terms and conditions and pay and grading for staff carrying out similar roles in each FRA. Potential opportunities could be lost. More consistency around equal work of equal value would enable these opportunities to be capitalised upon.

However, through the NIC the FRAs are looking at what opportunities exist to increase opportunities. They are considering the harmonisation of HR functions, including development of:

- an All Wales approach to all aspects of Human Resource strategy and policy which delivers greater efficiency and improved outcomes;
- a common approach to occupational health policy, which meet the needs of all three FRAs in the most effective and efficient way;
- a combined and coordinated HR resource which utilises specialist skills to enhance service delivery across the 3 FRAs, including:

- Investigation of a single strategic lead officer for HR management within Wales
- Commonality of policy for Grey and Green Book staff to ensure inter service resource sharing
- Further development of shared specialist and support functions to deliver greater resilience and efficiency
- An All Wales recruitment, development and retirement strategy and policy where staff are able to work between FRAs
- A standardised approach to working patterns which provides greater inter operability between FRAs
- A common strategy and policy for succession planning on an all Wales basis
- a common strategy and policy for succession planning on an all Wales basis;
- equality of role function and remuneration through complimentary organisational structures and processes; and,
- an integrated HR IT systems which deliver seamless inter operability and functionality.

There could be the potential for small efficiencies to be made through bringing together some of their support functions. Further work could be undertaken to identify areas where it would be of benefit and to quantify the costs which could be saved.

**Recommendation 9:** It is recommended the FRAs explore opportunities for efficiencies by bringing together their support functions.

### **Fire Safety prevention activity: common approach**

Through the NIC the FRAs are looking at opportunities to bring together a more consistent approach to the preventative agenda. In the main this appears to focus on development of common policy, but could also benefit from consideration of opportunities to share the administration of common programmes and interventions.

An all-Wales approach would be beneficial in engaging the public and could realise efficiencies through shared resourcing. The NIC needs to increase the momentum on delivery against this work stream.

### **Strategic Partnerships**

The increasing emphasis on collaboration and strategic partnership has proved challenging for some FRAs. One issue is the complexity of partnership arrangements and the number of organisations with which each FRA must engage.

The requirement for Welsh Government grant funding bids to be signed off by local partners has proved challenging, particularly in Mid and West and South Wales.

Mid and West Wales FRA, in their evidence to the Commission, point to challenges in being accepted as partners on Local Service Boards (LSBs). They stated this restricts their ability to influence and contribute to local priorities at a strategic level.

In South Wales ensuring the FRA is recognised as a key partner across areas has also proved complex. An invitation has been extended to South Wales to provide representation at only two out of the ten LSBs, and two of the Regional Collaborative Boards. Providing representation at ten of the LSBs at the appropriate level of seniority, although important, would be challenging.

Whilst North Wales, in their evidence to the Commission, indicated working with a number of LAs has not proved problematic, they accept their resources for engaging are limited.

North Wales FRA is coterminous with other major organisations and partnerships in the region, and this has contributed to largely effective and well established partnership arrangements. During discussions around the project, North Wales FRS emphasised the effective partnership arrangements in the region go beyond co-terminosity of organisational boundaries. They attribute the strength of arrangements to the development of strong sense of regional identity.

However, organisational and regional boundaries do pose a challenge in the other two FRA areas.

Co-terminosity can pose a challenge to Local Resilience Fora (LRFs). LRFs are based on Police boundaries which, in South Wales and Mid and West Wales, require FRA representation on two separate LRFs. This can be resource intensive and can result in duplication of effort. Whilst the aims of each LRF are the same, each has differing working methods and distinct systems. Work being undertaken as part of the Compact is seeking to improve regionalised emergency planning and is considering how duplication of effort in a number of areas can be reduced.

Some flexibility has been shown in the approach to South Wales FRA engaging with the LRFs. For instance, as South Wales FRA chair the Chemical Biological Resilience Nuclear Explosive (CBRNE) Groups in both South Wales and Gwent they have been influential in encouraging the LRFs to create a single CBRNE group covering both areas. There are other organisations which cover multiple LRFs such as Natural Resources Wales, Coastguard, WAST and Public Health Wales but as national organisations they get around the challenges by having regional representatives who attend. The current position has not created significant problems in terms of operational response and collaborative working for the LRFs but it does require the FRAs to stretch their resources.

There is no easy solution. The FRAs have given evidence on this matter to the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery.

## **7.2. Governance Arrangements**

By virtue of a combination of legislative provisions<sup>56</sup>, the FRAs are responsible for ensuring business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. In discharging this accountability, members and senior officers are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of the FRAs affairs and the stewardship of the resources at their disposal.

All three FRAs in Wales have in place corporate governance arrangements, and codes of conduct, which are aligned with the principles of the CIPFA/ Solace framework, Delivery Good Governance in Local Government.

The FRAs are the decision making bodies which:

- determine annual budget requirements, seeking contributions from LAs,
- agree the levels of personnel and vehicles required,
- monitor and scrutinise performance,
- approve strategic plans and policies, and
- approve the composition of any committees, sub-committees and working groups.

### **Schemes of Delegation**

In order to facilitate operational and financial management throughout the FRAs, certain powers are delegated to the Officers by the FRAs. Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, FRAs are required to maintain a list of powers delegated to Officers and to make it available for inspection purposes<sup>57</sup>. This list of delegated powers forms an integral part of the Authority's overall governance arrangements. These delegated powers may from time to time be amended, added to or reduced in the interest of operational efficiency as determined by each FRA, meaning different areas have different schemes.

### **Pension Boards**

The Public Service Pensions Act 2013 reforms public sector pension arrangements. It is proposed the regulations being made under that Act will require FRAs to govern, regulate and administer their individual pension schemes from 2015, including the establishment of Pensions Boards. Consideration of governance and any changes will need to take account of this.

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<sup>56</sup> Including Part VIII of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003 and Regulations made under that Part of that Act, Part II of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004, Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and the individual combination scheme orders in respect of each FRA

<sup>57</sup> Section 100G of the Local Government Act 1972

### **7.3. Current arrangements**

#### **Role of Fire and Rescue Authorities**

FRA currently perform both an executive role and scrutiny a role. The FRA sets the strategic direction based on advice from Officers (the Chief Fire Officer) whilst matters relating to operational activities remain with the Chief Fire Officer. In this respect, Officers advise and Members decide. Chief Fire Officers are appointed by and are accountable to the FRA.

Given the significant financial pressures being faced by all public services, strong political leadership has never been more important to ensure FRSs continue to become more efficient, deliver value for money to the public and are accountable to the public. Some of the decisions being made to better match resources to risk can be unpalatable and the rationale for such decisions needs to be communicated clearly, supported by evidence. It is recognised that activity levels have decreased significantly for the FRS whilst the level of resources has remained largely the same as was previously the case.

The funding arrangements also require an openness and transparency with constituent LAs who are asked to take a view as to the levy provided and to balance this against their other, often competing, financial pressures locally. As budgets become even tighter, it becomes even more important decisions are able to be scrutinised by those affected, whilst recognising the harsh reality of doing more with less, the same with less or even less with less in the future.

Principles such as devising stronger democratic processes; providing a greater focus on achieving stronger performance outcomes, as well as focusing spend on delivery rather than support functions, are key to future change.

Sir Ken Knight, in *Facing the Future*, stated the FRAs in England making the greatest strides towards efficiencies were those with the greatest separation of responsibilities between operational advice from the professional arm (Officers of the Authority) and decisions taken by the political arm (Members of the Authority).

#### **Robust and transparent scrutiny**

It is difficult to evidence a robust level of challenge by the FRAs, and there is a lack of transparency around key decisions. Publicly available information (for example, minutes of FRA, and other committee, meetings) usually records the sign off of key decisions, such as the budget and Improvement Plan. Whilst officers have indicated a great deal of consultation and briefing is provided in the run up to key decisions being taken, it could be argued it does not constitute effective and transparent scrutiny and challenge. Greater challenge can be seen when FRAs are faced with difficult decisions, to which there is strong opposition. Officers, in a professional capacity, have the

knowledge and expertise to make decisions about the operational management of the service. A large amount of officer time is utilised in providing briefing, sharing their professional knowledge with Members to inform decisions. There is a lack of evidence around the knowledge and capacity of FRA members to provide effective challenge, particularly when they are operating on a part time basis and in a regional capacity.

A lack of separation between the executive and the scrutiny functions of FRAs could lead to a lack of clarity around the role of members. Evidence of how effectively the FRA carries out scrutiny was difficult to obtain. Minutes of meetings indicate most decisions are approved with little challenge, indicating little transparent scrutiny. However, the FRSs officers indicated informal engagement with members also takes place.

Anecdotal evidence suggests the public's strong attachment to the fire services has the potential to constrain the difficult decisions required to ensure the most efficient and effective service in a changing landscape. The FRAs in Wales have faced local public opposition to attempts to reconfigure services to changing risk profiles and reduced funding. As well as the potential conflict facing FRA members in fulfilling their executive role and scrutinising decisions, the local – regional dimension in Wales adds another layer of complexity. Local accountability is played out through regional arrangements. This could present a conflict for Members, although it could be argued the regional make up of FRAs decreases the risk of personal preferences having undue influence over effective decision making processes, as the majority of members will not be from the area(s) affected.

In their evidence to the Williams Commission, North Wales FRA makes reference to barriers to change, including:

'the public's perception of 'winning and losing' – the Authority takes a strategic view of services for the whole of North Wales. However, that is not how people view their local service, and can resist changing what they have become accustomed to, despite reassurances...people will first and foremost seek to apply pressure to secure services for themselves, which may be at odds with the strategic view that the service-provider must maintain. This is particularly important in the context of changing boundaries, and the possibility that people's individual voices may fade before they reach the decision-makers.'<sup>58</sup>

Communication and public engagement (more information on page on public engagement is included in section 6.6 on page 49) can help overcome these barriers. The Local Government Act 2000 resulted in separating the executive from the non-executive functions in LAs. Downe and Ashworth, in their Evaluation of the Scrutiny Development Fund in Wales (2012),<sup>59</sup> state the evidence suggests this has been successful in creating clear and transparent political leadership.

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<sup>58</sup> North Wales FRS Evidence to the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery.

<sup>59</sup> Evaluation of the Scrutiny Development Fund in Wales, Downe and Ashworth, 2012.

## **Appointment, Role and Functions of Chief Fire Officer**

Article 23 of the combination scheme orders, which established the current FRAs, transferred the employees of the previous fire brigades to the FRAs. Article 9 enables the FRAs to appoint such other officers and employees as the FRA think necessary for the efficient discharge of their functions.

Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 applies to FRAs and allows the FRA to arrange for the discharge of their functions by an officer of the Authority. Responsibilities are delegated to the Chief Fire Officer under Schemes of Delegations.

The statutory framework for the Police is very different. The role of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chief Constable are both set out in legislation, as are their functions. PCCs set the overall direction of the police force, its budget and priorities. Police and Crime Panels scrutinise PCCs. The Chief Constable is responsible for managing and running the Police force.

The Wales Ambulance Service Trust (WAST) operates under a different governance model. It was established in 2009 as an all Wales Trust. The planning of emergency ambulance services is currently driven by Welsh Government policy and WAST are accountable to the Minister for Health and Social Services for a suite of key service standards which are set out in the Welsh Government's Annual Quality Framework. A Trust Board was established, comprising, the Chairman, Chief Executive and four executive directors, and seven non executive directors. The Board's role is to:

- Set the policy and strategic direction of the Trust;
- Manage the Risk;
- Manage its people and resources;
- Establish governance systems to enable it to effectively measure progress and performance, and to make sure this is achieved;
- Work in partnership with key stakeholders, both internal and external.

Strategic commissioning of services was previously the responsibility of Health Commission Wales (HCW) which was superseded by Wales Health and Social Services Commission in 2010 and commissioned services from WAST on behalf of LHBs. WAST is performance managed by both WHSSC and the Welsh Government.

The Strategic Review of WAST, published in April 2013, found within the current accountability and governance structures there is a significant lack of accountability.

## **Complexity of Current Funding Arrangements**

As noted elsewhere, under current arrangements, the fire component of the RSG is distributed purely on population, and the contributions the FRAs seek from their constituent LAs do differ significantly from the amounts allocated

under the RSG formula. However, a key principle of the funding arrangements is the Authorities are not required to spend the funding in line with the allocations.

It is difficult to evidence the level of robust challenge provided by the current system. Current budget setting arrangements are complex and indirect, and provide Welsh Government Ministers with little assurance or direct influence over the funding spent on fire services.

Little evidence could be found of transparent scrutiny of budget proposals. Formal consideration of budget and planning proposals takes place in public but this is usually at a point when proposals are signed off, with little apparent challenge (according to the minutes of FRA, and other committee, meetings). However, in providing evidence to the project, the FRSs have indicated informal consultation takes place, often on an official to official basis, behind the scenes to develop proposals which will be accepted by the FRA, and in turn the LAs, from which final contributions are sought. It is unclear the extent to which the process is robust and meaningful. The fact budgets appear to have been relatively protected over recent years indicates there has not been strong challenge or direction from the FRAs or LAs.

FRAs are part of the democratic structure of local government and current funding arrangements reflect this. However, the arrangements are complex, indirect and offer little evidence of effective challenge and scrutiny around the level of funding requested. There is also little opportunity for the Welsh Government to directly influence funding levels, should it determine more or less funding is required.

#### **7.4 Options for future arrangements**

The analysis of the current governance and funding arrangements has highlighted a number of areas which need to be addressed. Different models exist, at local, regional and national level. Scotland and New Zealand have national fire services, funded nationally and governed by Ministerially appointed independent Boards.

The following recommendations made need to be considered in the wider context of the Williams' Commission:

**Recommendation 10:** Executive versus scrutiny functions: It is recommended there should be a split between the operational management and scrutiny functions of the FRAs. It is therefore proposed the reform of fire and rescue services should include proposals to establish chief fire officers and prescribe the functions of the position which would largely relate to the operational management of fire and rescue services.

**Recommendation 11:** Accountability: A new model is recommended. There is potential for a model to include elements of both national and local accountability. The new model should address the need to monitor the performance of the body or bodies responsible for fire and rescue services in the exercise of their functions.

Currently the strategic direction is set nationally, via the National Framework for FRS', and the FRAs must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their duties. A reformed model will therefore need to ensure the body or bodies responsible for fire and rescue services in Wales have regard to the Framework, and appropriate governance mechanisms are in place.

**Recommendation 12:** Funding: the current funding model is indirect, complex and lacks transparency and a new model is recommended. Any new model must reflect the desired accountability and governance structure, taking into account how the funding for fire and rescue service is calculated and allocated, and increase the accountability and scrutiny relating to funding. It is important the funding reflects the structure and governance, not the other way round.

## **8. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Since devolution of responsibility in 2004/05, the nature of the role of the FRAs in Wales has changed significantly. The number of fires attended has reduced by 57%. Societal factors have contributed, such as changes in regulations making houses and home appliances safer and furniture and other materials more fire resistant. Lifestyle changes have also had an impact as the number of smokers reduced in Wales, and people moved from using chip pans to deep fat fryers. Alongside this, the increased focus on the prevention agenda appears to have contributed to making people in Wales safer from the risk of fire.

Overall, FRAs in Wales appear to be performing well. Particularly in areas of activity where they have lead responsibility for delivery, solid progress has been made since devolution. People in Wales are now safer from the risk of fire – numbers of fires, and the numbers of deaths and casualties as a result of fires, have reduced significantly over the period.

However, there are a couple of areas where progress has not been as significant. The FRAs still attend very high numbers of false alarms. In 2012/13 the FRAs in Wales attended 15,083 false alarms. By comparison, in the same year they attended 11,420 fires<sup>60</sup>. This clearly has significant resource implications for the service and improvements in this area could substantially contribute to required efficiency savings. Progress has been made in driving down malicious false alarms, but non-malicious false alarms remain considerably high. Other public sector organisations have a part to play, as a high number of false alarms are generated by parts of the public sector estate. The report concludes action is required to draw together key partners to raise the profile and drive momentum to reduce the numbers.

Numbers of RTCs have reduced, although progress has not been as significant as reductions in the number of fires. A number of organisations have responsibility for responding to, and preventing, RTCs which makes it difficult to directly correlate the contribution of FRAs activity to improvements in outcomes. According to the FRAs, the cessation in Welsh Government grant funding in 2012/13 made delivering prevention of RTCs challenging. The Welsh

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<sup>60</sup> Stats Wales.

Government's Road Safety Framework 2013 sets challenging targets and calls upon all partners to align their activity to the objectives in the framework.

This report concludes the review of the Welsh Government's Fire and Rescue National Framework (National Framework) needs to make explicit links with the Road Safety Framework. It recommends an element of future Welsh Government Community Fire Safety Grant is prioritised for delivery against activity relating to RTCs. It also recommends the review of the National Framework draws out the importance of FRAs developing effective mechanisms for measuring their contribution to improving outcomes in relation to RTCs.

This research found little evidence of robust benchmarking and highlighted inconsistencies in how the three FRAs record and use information which makes it challenging for them, and others, to compare performance. The report recommends this is addressed through the review of the National Framework, drawing upon the expertise of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser.

The report also found it has been difficult in the past to provide full assurance to Ministers around Value for Money (VFM). This is despite a multitude audit and assurance arrangements which are currently in place. The report concludes current arrangements fulfil legal requirements and are useful to the FRAs in helping provide information to drive improvements in performance. However, there appears to be gap at a high level relating to assurance around VFM.

The inconsistencies in the way information is recorded in each FRA, identified in relation to benchmarking, also make it difficult to draw high level assurances around VFM. The report concludes consideration should be given as to whether it would be possible to include a VFM judgement in the Auditor General for Wales' (AGWs) annual audit of the statement of accounts, to fill a gap in current arrangements.

The amount of funding received by the FRAs has remained relatively consistent over time, and does not appear to reflect the reductions in core operational activity reflected in the reductions in numbers of fires. The revenue budget in 2012/13 reflects a real terms reduction of approximately 3.6%. The FRAs argue this is due to driving resources into the prevention agenda as the requirement to respond has reduced. This could have resulted in a realignment of the workforce, as the prevention agenda can be delivered by a mix of operational and (less expensive) non-operational staff reducing the number of whole time fire fighters required. Inconsistencies in the way workforce information is recorded and used made it difficult to ascertain the extent to which the workforce has been realigned. Whilst some reduction in the number of whole time staff can be seen, the shift does not appear to be as significant as might be expected given the reduction in core response work requiring operational staff. Different approaches to recording staff information made it difficult to ascertain whether these whole time staff are operational or non-operational. The report concludes the inconsistencies in data collection should be addressed, and this should be picked up through the review of the National Framework.

In driving greater VFM this report considered collaboration. The National Issues Committee (NIC) has been established to drive forward greater collaboration. It has identified modest efficiency savings equating to £3.1m over five years. Based

on the total revenue budget for all three FRAs in 2012/13, this equates to savings of approximately 0.4% per annum. Its annual report, published in October 2013, indicates some progress has been made but momentum now needs to be increased.

The NIC annual report indicated the main challenges to making progress were inconsistencies in the collection and availability of information, and overcoming differences in processes used in each FRS. It appears the NIC's most significant area of progress has been in building relationships and identifying areas where consistency needs to be improved. This provides a solid foundation on which to build, but momentum now needs to build to ensure greater progress towards efficiencies is made.

The report also concludes current governance, scrutiny and funding arrangements are complex and lack transparency. FRAs, as currently constituted, perform both an executive role relating to the strategic delivery of the fire and rescue services, as well as a role in scrutinising the decisions, budget proposals and improvement plans. This places members in a position of conflict. Evidence of how robustly the FRAs fulfil their scrutiny role was difficult to find.

Similarly, funding arrangements are complex, indirect and lack transparency. Little evidence could be found of a transparent scrutiny role for LA members in providing contributions. The report draws out these issues and provides a series of options for future consideration, based on the outcome of the Commission's deliberations.

## 9. Recommendations:

Recommendations made in the report are summarised here:

**Recommendation 1:** It is recommended a cross sector task and finish group be established to facilitate consideration of the issues relating to false alarms, to raise the profile of the issue in key sectors and galvanise action. In the first instance the group should look to provide enhanced information on the numbers of false alarms per sector, and the resource implications, to inform priority action.

**Recommendation 2:** It is recommended a series of actions are taken to improve road safety including prioritising Community Safety Grant funding in this area the review and strengthening the Fire and Rescue National Framework. Additionally, through RBA methodology effective mechanisms should be put in place to effectively measure the FRAs role in reducing RTCs.

**Recommendation 3:** It is recommended the review of the Welsh Government Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 Onwards places emphasis on the importance of benchmarking and considers how FRAs might overcome the challenges identified, drawing on the expertise of the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor.

**Recommendation 4:** The Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser for Wales to be tasked with reviewing the current audit/inspection process with the WAO and advise the Minister as to next steps. Views from the FRAs to be taken into account within this review.

**Recommendation 5:** The Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and the WAO to consider whether and how a Value for Money judgement could be included in the AGW annual consideration of Statement of Accounts. It should also assess the benefits, costs, limitations and legal implications of including such a judgment.

**Recommendation 6:** It is recommended the FRAs consider how they can sustainably embed prevention into core business so it is less reliant on external factors.

**Recommendation 7:** It is recommended the inconsistencies in data recording relating to staffing are addressed to facilitate access to accurate and comparable data for the purpose of benchmarking.

**Recommendation 8:** The NIC should look at efficiency savings elsewhere to share learning and drive greater reductions. The Welsh Government's Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor could provide advice and share experiences of savings made elsewhere in the UK.

**Recommendation 9:** It is recommended the FRAs explore opportunities for efficiencies by bringing together their back office functions.

The following recommendations should be considered in the wider context of public service reform

**Recommendation 10:** Executive versus scrutiny functions: It is recommended there should be a split between the operational management and scrutiny functions of the FRAs. It is therefore proposed the reform of fire and rescue services should include proposals to establish chief fire officers and prescribe the functions of the position which would largely relate to the operational management of fire and rescue services;

**Recommendation 11:** Accountability and governance: A new model is recommended. There is potential for a model to include elements of both national and local accountability. The new model should address the need to monitor the performance of the body or bodies responsible for fire and rescue services in the exercise of their functions. A reformed model will therefore need to ensure the body or bodies responsible for fire and rescue services in Wales have regard to the Framework, and appropriate governance mechanisms are in place;

**Recommendation 12:** Funding: the current funding model is indirect, complex and lacks transparency and a new model is recommended. Any new model must reflect the desired accountability and governance structure, taking into account how the funding for fire and rescue service is calculated and allocated, and increase the accountability and scrutiny relating to funding. It is important the funding reflects the structure and governance, not the other way round.

## Annex A – Project Brief

The Project Brief	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is a key requirement of project Start-Up</li> <li>2. Includes the Project Approach</li> <li>3. Must be approved and signed of by the SRO/Project Board</li> <li>4. Precedes the production of a full Business Case</li> <li>5. Is an important document for initial communication with key stakeholders</li> <li>6. Is a key contributor to the Project Initiation Documentation</li> </ol>	
Guidance	Project Background
<p>Begin with a <i>brief</i> description of the project. Identify strategic and business drivers and associated policy decisions. Include relevant history and a brief summary of current operations.</p>	<p>2014 will mark ten years since responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Services (FRSS) in Wales was devolved to the Welsh Government (WG), and there have been many social and economic changes in that time. The WG budget has already been reduced by over £1 billion since 2010-11, and the next UK Spending Review is certain to reduce funding even further. This will inevitably lead to increased financial pressures across the public sector.</p> <p>There have also been many changes to the work of the FRSS in Wales over the last ten years, and the ‘Fire and Rescue Services in Wales Project 2013’ will focus on examining current activity to assess its continued effectiveness and value for money. It is proposed that a working group, made up of WG officials, FRSS representatives and other key stakeholders, be established to jointly oversee the development of this work.</p>

	<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>In 2012 the Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in Wales produced a ‘Strategic Outline Case and Discussion Document’. The former Minister for Local Government and Communities requested further data in some areas to underpin this work. The FRAs provided the information which was analysed by the Fire and Rescue Adviser and Inspector for Wales. Some anomalies in the available data remain, along with gaps in the narrative behind the data. It is therefore proposed to undertake a broader piece of work, as described above and outlined in more detail below.</p>
	<p><b>Project Approach</b></p>
<p>Briefly outline the type of solution to be developed by the project and the Approach of delivering that solution (if known at this point). Where possible you should also identify any environment into which the solution must fit (ie an IT area, policy area etc).</p> <p>(The type of solution simply refers to whether the end result will be and IT of paper based solution, do we develop it in house or bring in external suppliers/contractors, is the approach being taken in line with a specific WG ie corporate, programme, Ministerial objective etc ?)</p>	<p>There will be 3 phases to this work.</p> <p><b>Phase 1 – gathering information</b></p> <p>This phase is about establishing a clear and transparent picture. This will include gathering information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Current FRSS activity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- statutory and non statutory functions</li> <li>- prevention, protection and rescue</li> <li>- support functions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Funding sources</b></li> <li>• <b>Workforce model</b></li> </ul>

- **headcount and specialisms**
- **structures**
- **operational delivery models and rationale**

- **Governance**
- **Estates**
- **Statistics and performance management**
- **Scrutiny and assurance**
- **Collaboration and engagement**
  - **NIC**
  - **FRSS representation**
- **Other activity and the impact**
  - **UK**
  - **Other emergency services**
  - **Other**
  - **Interoperability of systems**

**Phase 2 – analysis of information**

**This phase will become clearer as phase 1 progresses. Some key questions that may need to be asked:**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any gaps in activity?</li> <li>• Are current activities effective?</li> <li>• What else is going on elsewhere?</li> <li>• Are the workforce models the right ones? What other models exist elsewhere?</li> <li>• What has the NIC achieved?</li> <li>• Are there further opportunities for collaboration?</li> <li>• How is VFM achieved?</li> </ul> <p><b>Phase 3 – report and recommendations</b></p> <p><b>A report and recommendations will be presented to the Minister for Local Government and Government Business, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclusions of information gathering and analysis</li> <li>• Recommendations</li> <li>• Links to other work</li> </ul>
<b>Project Definition, Outcomes &amp; Deliverables &amp; Critical Success Factors</b>	
<u><b>Project Definition</b></u>	<b>In the first instance the project will provide a full picture of the current shape of the FRSS in Wales, filling in gaps in current information and the narrative behind disparate data that is found.</b>

<p><b>Briefly explain what the project needs to achieve and how the intended outcomes will be delivered.</b></p> <p><b>What will success look like?</b></p> <p><b><u>Outcomes and Deliverables</u></b></p> <p><b>Define or clarify the objectives of the project in terms of outcomes, products and deliverables as known at this stage.</b></p> <p><b><u>Critical Success Factors</u></b></p> <p><b>Identify outcomes that must be achieved to meet the stated business requirement.</b></p>	<p><b>This will inform a second stage of work to analyse the current picture to ensure that activity continues to be effective and value for money.</b></p> <p><b>A small working group, consisting of key WG officials, the FRSS and other key stakeholders will be established to take forward the work. It will meet regularly to provide an assurance role around the collection and analysis of information.</b></p> <p><b>A report and recommendations will be presented to the Minister for Local Government and Government Business.</b></p> <p><b>Effective partnership working is critical.</b></p>	
	<b>In Scope</b>	<b>Out of Scope</b>
<p><b>Briefly describe at this point what is likely to be included and what is likely to be out of the</b></p>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>

project		
<b>Quality Expectations</b>		
<p>Outline any quality standards or ways of working that must be met to ensure fitness for purpose. These will be further defined in the Quality Management Strategy. But should included details of whether quality reviews have been planned and budgeted.</p> <p>Please contact the WG Gateway Hub Team for further details - <a href="mailto:Programmes&amp;Projects@wales.gsi.gov.uk">mailto:Programmes&amp;Projects@wales.gsi.gov.uk</a>.</p>	Assurance by Working Group	
<b>Quality Assurance</b>		
Identify any quality reviews or audits to be conducted and who will be responsible for conducting them. Define any management processes needed to support delivery such as change control and configuration management.	N/A	
<b>Constraints/Key Dependencies/Risks</b>		
Note major barriers or dependencies that may affect this project, such as funding, staff	Partnership working is critical.	

<p>resources and the outcomes of related projects.</p> <p>Make sure these are reflected in the Risk and Issues Logs for your project where relevant - If they have affected other projects then they are likely to affect yours.</p> <p>Make sure you also review the WG PPM Lessons Learned Database to find out common risks and issues for programmes and projects.</p> <p><a href="#">PPM Lessons Learned</a></p>	<p>Lack of resources could present a risk to the project. This will be managed through careful planning.</p> <p>Proposed fire fighter strike could potentially pose a risk to the timing of the project.</p> <p>Information will feed into the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery.</p> <p>The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 will be reviewed in late 2013 and the outcome of the project must feed into the review.</p>
<b>Expected Timescales</b>	
<p>Indicate expected timescales, as known at this point.</p>	<p>Project completion in 6-8 months.</p> <p>Phase 1 – gathering of information: 4 months</p> <p>Phase 2 – analysis of information: 1 month</p> <p>Phase 3 – recommendations and report: 1 month</p>

	<b>Project Management Team Structure</b>
<b>Define key personnel involved in project delivery. If posts have not yet been allocated annotate with TBC.</b>	<b>Alyson Francis – SRO</b> <b>Bethan Webber – Project Manager</b> <i>Assistant Fire Advisor</i> <b>Fire and Armed Forces Branch EO</b>

## **Annex B – Working Group Terms of Reference**

### **Fire and Rescue Services (FRSS) in Wales Project 2013 Working Group Terms of Reference**

#### **Statement of Purpose**

1. The Welsh Government (WG) is committed to delivering safe and strong communities in Wales. Through the Programme for Government the aim is to:

Make our communities safer through reductions in...the incidence and impact of fires as well as effective coordination of emergencies.
2. The purpose of the project is to examine the current activity of the Fire and Rescue Services (FRSS) in Wales, filling in gaps in current information and the narrative behind it, and assessing its continued effectiveness and value for money.
3. Information gathered will be analysed to inform a report and recommendations to the Minister for Local Government and Government Business.
4. Where appropriate, relevant conclusions and recommendations will be submitted to the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery for consideration alongside their examination of the wider public sector.
5. The Commission will also obtain evidence directly from the Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and FRSS in Wales as part of their consultation process.
6. In collecting and analysing information, the project Working Group will seek to work to the Commission's principle of 'diagnose before cure.'

#### **Scope and Functions**

7. The Working Group will oversee the development of information and preparation of a report and recommendations. The review will be conducted in 3 phases:
  - Phase 1 – gathering of information;
  - Phase 2 – analysis of information;
  - Phase 3 – production of a report and recommendations.
8. The Working Group will manage the progress of the project ensuring key milestones are met.

#### **Phase 1**

9. The Working Group will, in phase 1, provide an assurance role in relation to the gathering of information about the current activity of the FRSS in Wales. To ensure a complete picture is available, information will be collected under the following areas:
  - Current FRSS activity: statutory and non-statutory functions
  - Funding sources
  - Workforce models
  - Governance
  - Estates
  - Statistics and performance management
  - Scrutiny and assurance
  - Collaboration and engagement
  - Other activity and the impact
10. Members of the Working Group will signpost the project manager to available data to ensure gaps in information, and the narrative behind that information, can be filled.

## **Phase 2**

11. The Working Group will oversee an analysis of the information gathered in phase 1. They will provide clarity and help identify issues and risks.
12. To ensure appropriate alignment, and avoid duplication of effort, it is anticipated that the analysis of information will be carried out in line with the six areas to be examined by the Commission, namely:
  - Performance
  - Scale and Capability
  - Complexity
  - Governance, Scrutiny and Delivery
  - Culture and Leadership
  - The Welsh Government

## **Phase 3**

13. The analysis carried out in phase 2 will inform the development of a report, with conclusions and recommendations. This report will be a report to the Minister for Local Government and Government Business.
14. A section of the report will look to directly draw out conclusions and recommendations that would be more appropriately considered by the Commission, in line with their examination of the wider public sector.

## **Membership and Attendance**

15. The Working Group will be chaired by the Deputy Head of Community Safety, Community Safety Division, Welsh Government.

16. The Membership of the Working Group will comprise:

Alyson Francis	Chair - Deputy Head of Community Safety, Community Safety Division, Welsh Government
Bethan Webber	Welsh Government
Kingsley Rees	Head of Fire and Armed Services Branch, Welsh Government
TBC	Welsh Government Fire Adviser
Simon Smith	North Wales FRS
Richard Smith	Mid and West Wales FRS
Huw Jakeway	South Wales FRS
TBC	WLGA
Steve Pomeroy	Secretariat, Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery

17. Where members are unable to attend, substitutes may be nominated.

18. In support of its business, the Working Group may amend membership or invite others to attend.

19. In support of its business, the Working Group may establish meetings in addition to those scheduled.

20. Membership will be reviewed at the end of phase 1 of the project to ensure all interested parties are represented for subsequent phases. In particular, consideration will be given to Trade Union and Fire and Rescue Authority representation.

### **Arrangements for Meetings**

21. For the period commencing June 2013, the Working Group will meet as required.

22. The Secretariat of the Working Group will be provided by Welsh Government

23. The Secretariat will aim to circulate the agenda and papers one week prior to the Working Group meeting.

24. Following each meeting, confirmed minutes will be distributed to members within a week.

## **Annex C**

### **Data Quality Issues**

In some instances there are issues with discontinuity of data collection systems which make direct comparisons over time difficult. For example, caution is required when making comparisons between data collected via the Fire Data Report system and the Incident Recording System (introduced in 2009-10) which replaced it.

For background information on data collection, and more information on possible discontinuities in times series and other data comparison issues, please refer to the attached Data Quality Review:

<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/fire-statistics/?lang=en#/statistics-and-research/fire-statistics/fire-statistics-quality-report/?lang=en>

More information relating to data quality, can be found in the latest 'Fire Statistics, Wales' bulletin:

<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/fire-statistics/?lang=en>

## **Annex D**

### **OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE OF SERVICE DELIVERY**

#### **PEER ASSESSMENT SUMMARY REPORT**

**2012-2013**

**Report Author: Brian Fraser – Fire & Rescue Adviser  
Welsh Government**

**Date: June 2013**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Welsh Government introduced arrangements for the assessment of FRS operational performance in November 2006. The assessment process forms part of the Welsh Government's improvement, planning and assessment arrangements and involves Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) carrying out a self assessment against a centrally provided framework on a specific delivery area each year. Each FRS self assessment is assessed through a peer review by a team of members of the other two FRSS in Wales, supported by officials from the Welsh Government and Wales Audit Office (WAO).

1.2 The year 2012/13 was the final year of assessment within a three year cycle. Observations and recommendations contained within individual reports which are produced for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) are designed to support enhancement of their policies and procedures and, under improvement planning arrangements within the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (2009 Measure), to inform the FRSS own wider self assessment of performance across the whole range of functions.

1.3 The assessment in 2012-13 focussed on Legislative Fire Safety and 'Direction of Travel'.

1.4 Legislative Fire Safety is the term used to define the FRSS response to their statutory duty to enforce the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This Order places responsibility for safety from fire within most non domestic premises, on the owner or operator of a building.

1.5 The responsibility on the FRS implicitly includes 'Enabling' those responsible for a building to understand their responsibilities and how best to ensure safety from fire for occupants'. This also includes 'Enforcement,' where serious breaches or repeated failures of the law exist.

1.6 The 'Direction of Travel' theme reviews progress against recommendations from previous years' assessments.

1.7 This report identifies the Fire and Rescue Adviser's view of the position across Wales based on the Peer Assessment Team (PAT) findings. It also highlights areas of good practice and some of the key areas which the PAT suggested required further attention.

## **2. FIRE AND RESCUE ADVISER'S VIEW ON THE PEER ASSESSMENT TEAMS FINDINGS**

2.1 In relation to Legislative Fire Safety, the PAT's view was that individually all three FRS had provided comprehensive and reliable evidence to support the information detailed within their self assessments. In terms of 'Direction of Travel', the PAT confirmed the progress made for each FRS against the recommendations were accurate.

2.2 The PAT found examples of collaboration through sharing information with other FRS through the All Wales Fire Safety Officer Forum, National Issues Committee Fire Safety work streams and the All Wales Legislative Fire Safety Group. Formal partnership arrangements with other sectors were evidenced, including NHS Wales and Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales. There was also evidence of data sharing with external partners, such as LA housing departments in relation to Houses of Multiple Occupations (HMOs) and examples of enforcement notices being served as a result of such information transfer.

2.3 The PAT identified that a number of opportunities for collaboration and integration of functions and services had not been taken. For example, the introduction of different management information systems across Wales. The National Issues Committee (NIC) has identified a work stream for Legislative Fire Safety, which the FRS anticipate will provide a conduit for greater and more meaningful collaboration, making more effective use of available resources. One of the key areas being developed under this work stream is an All Wales Fire Safety Prosecution Function aimed at bringing consistency and efficiency in this field.

2.4 There are other areas which offer the opportunity for closer working that would provide more consistency of service delivery across Wales and possible cost savings, and it is envisaged that the NIC could explore these.

2.5 These areas include:-

- More consistency in prioritising risk – Each individual FRS conducts trend analysis to pick up emerging risks. There would be benefit in developing a systematic and consistent approach to this across the three FRSs.
- Management Information Systems - Each FRS has an Information System relating to Legislative Fire Safety. Two have systems that are able to make premises risk information available to other internal functions such as community fire safety and operational intelligence. The third was in the process of acquiring such a system. The development of separate systems was a missed opportunity to collaborate on an All Wales system which would allow closer working between the three Services, greater consistency for the public and potential savings in procurement and support for the system.
- Staffing Resources – All three FRSs have different staffing structures and terms and conditions in place. This is to ensure the Fire Safety function fits into their overarching staffing structures which also differ. There were innovative practices being introduced in two of the FRS which were leading to higher productivity and

considerable cost savings (eg agile working in South Wales FRS and in North Wales FRS where non-operational staff are now employed as Fire Safety officers). Whilst the innovative approach to staffing the Fire Safety function in North Wales FRS was new, and has yet to be fully reviewed, the other FRSS should at some point look to North Wales and consider the case for similar staffing arrangements in their own organisation.

- Performance Management – All three FRS are embedding the introduction of outcome based performance measures locally which support national indicators on Fire Protection. FRSS should work together to ensure a consistent approach across Wales, allowing benchmarking and comparison.

### **3. OVERVIEW OF PROTECTION (Legislative Fire Safety)**

3.1 As highlighted within the individual FRA peer reports, the PAT confirmed that each FRS provided reliable evidence to demonstrate the views provided in their self assessment returns and were able to provide additional information on site on issues not initially reflected.

3.2 The PAT identified some examples of good practice as well as making recommendations where further improvements were required. A full list of proposals for improvement specific to each Service can be found at Annex 1.

#### **Data Analysis and Prioritisation of Risk**

3.3 All three FRSS have processes in place to prioritise activity based on risk, and collate a 'Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP)'. However, only North Wales FRS identified they could adjust inspection frequencies to allow proactive targeting of specific types and uses of premises in response to either local or national issues. The PAT noted inconsistent approaches across the three FRS, for integrating information which could influence their RBIP, such as incident data and Fire Investigation reports.

3.4 The FRSS conduct trend analysis to pick up emerging risks; however it was not clear whether there was a systematic methodology within or across services on how this was done. The PAT was unable to confirm how trends were accounted for within core strategy or business planning for legislative fire safety.

*The PAT recommended that systems of trend analysis are reviewed.*

#### **Allocation of Resources**

3.5 Mid and West Wales FRS and North Wales FRS are both organised locally through a County Command based structure where functions such as legislative fire safety are devolved to local areas supported by a central Legislative Fire Safety function. The PAT found evidence that this was a useful way to flexibly manage risk and re-direct staff across functions to priorities locally. In Mid and West Wales FRS however, there was evidence of competing central and command based priorities. In some instances central priorities were overruled at county level, where priority was

given to operational activity, reducing the resource available for the Fire Safety function as a consequence. This was also identified in a previous Operational Assurance process (2008-2009), where it was noted Legislative Fire Safety was not meeting agreed performance standards.

3.6 South Wales FRSS structure is based on a single fire safety function. A recently implemented “agile working” system (where Fire Safety officers work flexible hours from home and across locations in the Service), has resulted in decreased staff costs and increased output. There was evidence of this duty system being well received by current and prospective staff, and was commonly cited as family friendly.

3.7 North Wales FRS employs non-operational staff as Fire Safety officers. This was a relatively new concept within the FRS but was very well received by the service, appeared to be working well, and had brought cost efficiencies.

3.8 All FRSS appeared to have times when warranted Fire Safety officers were unavailable to respond to Legislative Fire Safety matters outside of office hours. Although the services confirmed there was an informal attempt to maintain warranted officers on tactical officer rotas, there was no mandatory policy to maintain a legislative fire safety officer availability 24/7.

*The PAT recommended this area was reviewed in all three FRSS with a possibility of providing cross service availability.*

## **Engagement and Planning**

3.9 The FRSS outlined several examples of mechanisms for staff to engage with internal stakeholders to plan activity. This included interdepartmental working groups developing plans for activity in areas such as Unwanted Fire Signals.<sup>61</sup>

3.10 Positive examples of external stakeholder and delivery partner activities were provided, though it was not consistently clear to the PAT how these stakeholders were involved in the planning of activity.

3.11 Formal partnership arrangements with other sectors were evidenced within two of the FRSS with examples of enforcement notices being served as a result of information transfer.

*The PAT recommended the planning process be reviewed to ensure all stakeholder priorities are accounted for.*

## **Consistent Systems of Delivery**

3.12 All Services outlined formalised quality assurance processes, including methods such as workflow audits.

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<sup>61</sup> Unwanted Fire Signals – False alarms generated from premises protected by automatic fire detection and fire alarm systems (eg Residential Care Homes).

## Measuring and Evaluating Effectiveness

3.13 The FRSS use the Welsh Government core and strategic performance indicators to measure success. These are intended as a high level measure of performance, and as such are not sufficiently complete to reflect the impact of all the Legislative Fire Safety activity. It was also recognised that measures of success were not generally communicated to citizens.

3.14 There have been examples within Wales where awareness of responsibilities under the Fire Safety Order has differed within some community groups (for instance the Chinese community in Cardiff where a risk was identified with sleeping accommodation above commercial kitchens). Enabling activity has been targeted (using Outreach workers) to ensure no communities are disproportionately at risk through ignorance of or non-compliance with the Fire Safety Order 2005. However none of the FRSS had a comprehensive system for monitoring diversity and socio-demographic information to identify trends and to assist with enabling activity.

The PAT recommended this area is explored and a suite of local indicators developed to link activity to outcomes. Further, that the local indicators allow comparison between FRSS to identify best practice.

## 4. OVERVIEW OF DIRECTION OF TRAVEL

4.1 As part of the continuous improvement process, the opportunity was taken to review the progress made against recommendations as a result of the Operational Assurance assessments undertaken during the last three years. It was agreed collectively between the PAT, Welsh Government and Wales Audit Office that the Team would have capacity to consider 25% of the recommendations from previous reviews. The recommendations for assessment were identified as those which were viewed as the biggest risk, or where the Team were not clear on progress that had been made. The 'Direction of Travel' therefore provided a partial view on improvements made by the FRS as a result of the Operational Assurance process as the PAT, Welsh Government and WAO did not include recommendations for assessment where they were aware improvements had been made.

4.2 The following include examples of improvement following the implementation of previous recommendations:-

- Progress made on monitoring the status of High Risk referrals for Home Fire Safety Checks - The original PAT found inconsistencies in the identification, management and monitoring of high risk referrals for Home Fire Safety Checks in South Wales FRS (SWFRS). Since the initial review, SWFRS had demonstrated a more collaborative approach between departments to ensure high risk Home Fire Safety Checks were completed within a maximum time limit. In addition a local performance indicator had been established to monitor progress.

The consistent management and implementation of Home Safety activity across Wales has been identified as a matter for the National Issues Committee, which should provide a conduit to share best practice across Wales.

- Progress made on reviewing training delivery capacity to meet safety critical training needs - The original PAT identified constraints on training delivery capacity that could affect compliance in risk critical training in Mid & West Wales FRS (MWWFRS). MWWFRS responded by undertaking a review of this skills gap by increasing their capacity to deliver risk critical training, reducing the skills gap to approximately 15% in June 2012 from its previous level of 60% in 2009. This was achieved, in part, through creating 3 additional posts within the training function to provide greater resilience for risk critical training. The progress made by MWWFRS in the area of training has been recognised with a National Training Award.
- Progress made to review arrangements for the validation of risk information for premises within Control mobilisation systems are appropriate – In North Wales FRS (NWFRS), the original PAT reported they were unable to confirm a process for the re-validation of ‘tags’ of risk information on the mobilisation system, and as a result the system carried the risk of holding information that was inaccurate. During the visit NWFRS confirmed they had reviewed arrangements for risk information, tagging and also made improvements to relevant protocols for updating and removing tag information. This has resulted in a reduction in the categories required for various premises to be recorded to allow improved efficiency and accuracy.

## Annex E – Attendance at fires by Welsh FRAs

Fig. 1 shows the total number of fires attended by each FRA in Wales from 2004/05 – 2012/13. In this period North Wales attendance at fires reduced by 46%, Mid and West Wales attendance reduced by 55% and South Wales by 60%. Fig. 2 shows the total number of fires attended by each FRA, per 10,000 of the population.

Fig. 1

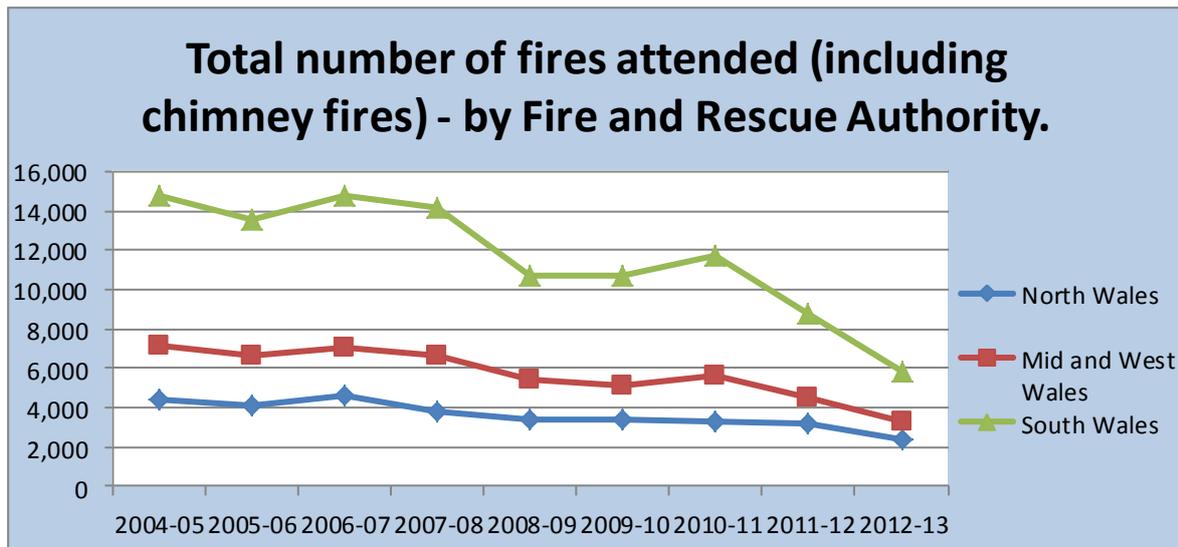


Fig. 2

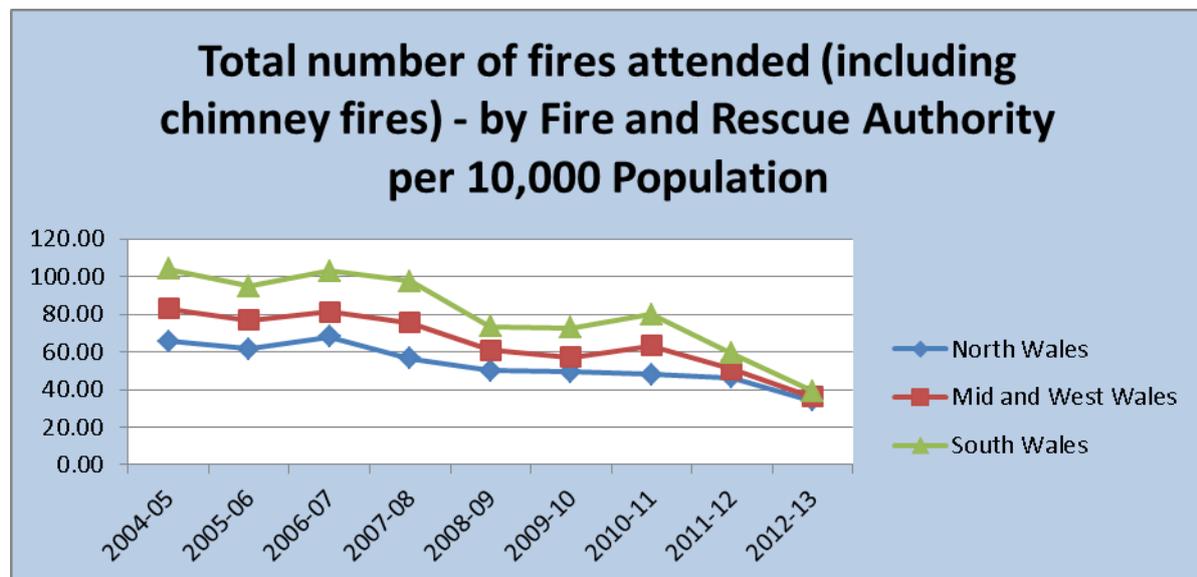


Fig 1, 2: Welsh Government Stats Wales, (2013) *Community Safety*, [ONLINE], Accessed on: 02/11/2013

## **Annex F – Auditor General for Wales Improvement Reports**

### **WAO Annual Improvement Report – South Wales FRA, March 2013**

#### **Summary Report**

1 Each year, the Auditor General must report on how well Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national parks are planning for improvement and delivering their services. Drawing on the work of the relevant Welsh inspectorates, as well as work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office, this report presents a picture of improvement over the last year. The report covers South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority) delivery and evaluation of services in relation to 2011-12, and its planning of improvement for 2012-13.

2 Overall the Auditor General has concluded that the Authority is managing its improvement programme well, but public reporting of performance is not as clear as it could be.

3 We found that the Authority is making progress in delivering improvements in its core functions although there remain areas of concern. We came to this conclusion because:

- there were fewer dwelling fires attended than the previous year and, although the number of fatalities increased, the number of injuries decreased;
- there were fewer non-domestic premises fires attended than the previous year, no fatalities and the number of injuries decreased;
- there were fewer deliberate fires attended during 2011-12 than the previous year and the number of injuries decreased, but the high level of deliberate fires attended remains a concern; and
- the number of road traffic collisions attended remained broadly the same and the number of casualties decreased, but there have been increases in the number of fatal and serious accidents and within priority groups of young drivers and motorcyclists.

4 We also found that the Authority's evaluation and reporting of its performance is balanced, but public reporting could be further strengthened and more accessible. We came to this conclusion because the Authority:

- has produced a more balanced view of its performance in 2011-12 than in previous years;
- has taken positive steps to publicise the availability of its Strategic Improvement Plan, but it relies heavily on the electronic format and wider access to the data may be an issue for some people; and
- has used a wide range of relevant information to arrive at its conclusions and is working to improve its ability to show the impact of its activity.

5 Finally, we concluded that the Authority is likely to comply with the requirement to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in 2012-13. We came to this conclusion because:

- business planning arrangements are well-embedded, comprehensive and outcome-focused;
- the Authority continues to manage its financial challenges effectively;
- good progress is being made to address the proposals for improvement identified in previous assessments;
- although there are some weaknesses in approach, the Authority is continuing to improve its approach to public engagement; and
- governance arrangements have been effectively reviewed as part of the Authority's Annual Governance Statement process.

## **Recommendations**

6 There are no formal recommendations made in this report.

## **WAO Annual Improvement Report – North Wales FRA, April 2013**

### **Summary Report**

1 Each year, the Auditor General must report on how well Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national parks are planning for improvement and delivering their services. Drawing on the work of the relevant Welsh inspectorates, as well as work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office, this report presents a picture of improvement over the last year. The report covers North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority) delivery and evaluation of services in relation to 2011-12 and its planning of improvement for 2012-13.

2 Overall, the Auditor General has concluded that the Authority is managing its improvement programme well, but does not do enough to compare its performance to other, similar bodies.

3 We found that the Authority is making progress in delivering improvement in its core functions. We came to this conclusion because:

- there were fewer dwelling fires attended than the previous year, and the number of fatalities and injuries decreased;
- there were fewer non-domestic premises fires attended than the previous year, no fatalities and the number of injuries decreased;
- there were fewer deliberate fires attended during 2011-12 than the previous year, no fatalities and the number of injuries decreased; and

- fewer road traffic collisions were attended, casualties decreased and fewer young drivers were involved in accidents, although the number of fatal and serious accidents and fatalities increased.

4 We also found that the Authority's evaluation and reporting of its performance is balanced, but it does not do enough to compare its performance to other, similar bodies. We came to this conclusion because the Authority:

- produced a more balanced view of its performance in 2011-12 than in previous years;
- took positive steps to publicise the availability of its Assessment of Performance; and
- used a wide range of relevant information to arrive at its conclusions but does not do enough to compare its performance to other, similar bodies.

5 Finally, we concluded that the Authority is likely to comply with the requirement to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in 2012-13. We came to this conclusion because:

- business planning arrangements are well-embedded, provide a clear picture of planned actions and are generally outcome-focused;
- the Authority continues to manage its financial challenges effectively;
- good progress is being made to address the proposals for improvement identified in our previous assessments;
- although there are some weaknesses in approach, the Authority is continuing to improve its approach to public engagement; and
- governance arrangements have been effectively reviewed as part of the Authority's Annual Governance Statement process.

## **Recommendations**

6 There are no formal recommendations made in this report.

## **WAO Annual Improvement Report – Mid and West Wales FRA, May 2013**

### **Summary Report**

1 Each year, the Auditor General must report on how well Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national parks are planning for improvement and delivering their services. Drawing on the work of the relevant Welsh inspectorates, as well as work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office, this report presents a picture of improvement over the last year. The report covers Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority) delivery and evaluation of services in relation to 2011-12, and its planning of improvement for 2012-13.

2 Overall the Auditor General has concluded that the Authority is managing its improvement programme well but public reporting of performance is not as clear and comprehensive as it could be.

3 We found that the Authority is making progress in delivering improvement in its core functions, although the slight increase in the level of injuries sustained in fires and the number of fatal and serious road traffic accidents remain an area for future focus. We came to this conclusion because:

- there were fewer dwelling fires attended than the previous year, and although the number of fatalities decreased, the number of people injured increased slightly compared with a decrease across Wales;
- there were fewer non-domestic premises fires attended than the previous year and no fatalities, but injuries increased slightly compared with a decrease across Wales;
- there were fewer deliberate fires attended than the previous year and the number of fatalities remains low; and
- the number of road traffic collisions attended and the number of casualties decreased but the number of fatal and serious accidents increased.

4 We also found that the Authority's evaluation and reporting is better than previous years, but there is scope to strengthen public reporting and make it more accessible, in line with Welsh Government guidance. We came to this conclusion because the Authority:

- produced a more robust and balanced view of its performance in 2011-12, but fully reflecting Welsh Government guidance would strengthen improvement reporting by providing a clear view on how well the Authority feels it has achieved its objectives, explaining why information used in its self-assessment is relevant and using less technical language which some people may find difficult to understand;
- took steps to publicise the availability of its assessment but relies heavily on the electronic format and consequently, wider access to the data may be an issue for some; and
- used a narrow range of relevant information to arrive at its conclusions and is working to improve its ability to show the impact of its activity.

5 Finally, we concluded that the Authority is likely to comply with the requirement to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in 2012-13, although it faces ongoing challenges in implementing its planned changes to services. We came to this conclusion because:

- business planning arrangements are much improved, provide a clearer picture of actions planned and are more outcome-focused but challenges remain in delivering these changes;
- the Authority continues to manage its financial challenges effectively;

- good progress is being made to address the proposals for improvement identified in previous assessments;
- although there are some weaknesses in approach, the Authority is continuing to improve its approach to public engagement; and
- governance arrangements have been effectively reviewed as part of the Authority's Annual Governance Statement process.

### **Recommendations**

6 There are no formal recommendations made in this report.