

# ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Annual Report 2018-19





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## » WELCOME

Welcome to the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) Annual Report. 2018-19 has been an exceptionally busy and important year for the Service. We have achieved a great deal over the past 12 months, including the publication of the Fire Authority's [Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan \(IRMP\) 2019-23](#), dealing with one of the hottest summers on record, achieving a record fine for serious breaches of fire safety regulations and welcoming Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) for the first time.

The following report highlights just how much the Service has achieved in 2018-19 and we are both extremely proud of all the staff at RBFRS who have made this possible. We believe that through the positive collaborative working relationships of Members, staff and volunteers at RBFRS, we are delivering for the people we serve.

We hope that you find the report informative and interesting, and that it gives you a window into the world of RBFRS. Over the next 12 months, we will continue to work hard to ensure that the Service has the right resources, people and plans in place to build on the successes of 2018-19.



**Councillor Colin Dudley**  
Chairman  
Royal Berkshire Fire  
Authority



**Trevor Ferguson**  
Chief Fire Officer and Chief  
Executive  
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue



## » ABOUT US

In our [Corporate Plan and IRMP 2015-19](#), Royal Berkshire Fire Authority set RBFRS six public facing commitments:

1. We will educate people on how to prevent fires and other emergencies, and what to do when they happen.
2. We will ensure a swift and effective response when called to emergencies.
3. We will ensure appropriate fire safety standards in buildings.
4. We will seek opportunities to contribute to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda.
5. We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.
6. We will work with Central Government to ensure a fair deal for Royal Berkshire.

In addition, RBFRS set an additional four objectives for 2018-19:

1. We will recruit, train and develop our people to ensure we create a safe, professional and capable workforce that are supported to become the best public servants they can be for the residents of Berkshire.
2. We will manage RBFRS in accordance with appropriate legal requirements, financial standards and associated guidance, and be transparent in our compliance.
3. We will be strong and visible in our leadership in developing a diverse and inclusive 'one team' culture where everyone's contribution is valued and positive behaviours are recognised.
4. We will explore and maximise collaboration opportunities to ensure we deliver effective and efficient services to the people we serve.

During the past year, we published our [Corporate Plan 2019-23](#), which refreshed our commitments to the people of Royal Berkshire.





## » TIMELINE OF THE LAST YEAR (APRIL 2018 - MARCH 2019)

Here is a summary of some of the main events that have taken place in the past year at RBFRS.



### CROWTHORNE PLANS APPROVED

In July, Bracknell Forest Council approved planning permission for the County's second tri-service community station in Crowthorne. The building will offer a shared location for our Service, Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service, as well as improved facilities for the local community and firefighters alike. Work is expected to be complete by summer 2020.



### NEW RECRUITS COURSE WITH OXFORDSHIRE

21 new firefighters went on duty in the Thames Valley in September after completing an intensive training course run collaboratively between our Service and Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service.



### FIREHOUSE RE-OPENING

In November, the Service's Firehouse re-opened following investment from the Fire Authority. The Firehouse is one of the Service's key training facilities in Berkshire, offering firefighters the opportunity to train in realistic conditions.



### HMICFRS

In January 2019, our Service was inspected by HMICFRS, with the report being published in June 2019. A graded judgement of performance will be provided as part of two reports: our own individual graded judgement and a national report on fire and rescue services as a whole., which will be published later in the year.

April

May

June

July

August

Sept

Oct

Nov

Dec

Jan

Feb

March

### 5,000 BLOOD DONATIONS

Local resident Ken Butcher became the 5,000th person to make a blood donation at a fire station in Berkshire during a visit to Slough Fire Station.

### BURSARY FUNDING

Staff were offered the chance to apply for funding to enable them to study an additional qualification, further increasing the capacity of the workforce.



### SILVER AWARD FOR ARMED FORCES COVENANT

In July, our Service was awarded the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award.



### AWARDS CEREMONY

Our annual Awards Ceremony celebrated the outstanding contribution of staff, volunteers and members of the public.

### REMOTELY MANAGED STATIONS AND FLEXI DUTY OFFICERS PROJECT

A project got underway involving the transfer of additional resources and investment into front line station delivery.

### RECORD FINE FOR LANDLORD

A company was fined a substantial amount for serious breaches of fire safety regulations.

### NEW FIRE ENGINES

Three new fire engines were deployed at Newbury and Slough Fire Stations.

### OUTDOOR FIRES

With the warm weather came a high number of incidents of fires in the open. Over June and July our Service attended 225 outdoor fires.



### READING PRIDE

The Service attended Reading Pride, to promote our work and career opportunities available within our inclusive Service.

### MEMBER/OFFICER WORKSHOP

A workshop was held between officers and Fire Authority Members to develop the strategic direction of our Service.

### THEALE PLANNING

West Berkshire Council granted planning permission for a new tri-service community fire station in Theale.

### FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE AND POLICE SHARE OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

In October, Thames Valley Police and the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) were officially welcomed to Newsham Court, the Headquarters of our Service.



### OPERATION SPLASH

The Service led a successful joint training exercise to test the response to a light aircraft crash over a lake.



### MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

The Service marked Time to Talk Day by promoting mental health support in the workplace and staff shared their personal stories in an effort to break mental health stigma.

### BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX CONSULTATION

The budget for 2018-19 was approved following a public consultation on the Council Tax precept.

### SUPERVISORY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME BEGINS

In March 2019, the Supervisory Leadership Development Programme began with two pilot cohorts to improve cross-functional and cross-Service working.

### WORKING WITH THE WILDLIFE TRUST

Our Service assisted the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) in managing the growth of gorse on Greenham and Crookham Commons.

### PUBLICATION OF CORPORATE PLAN AND IRMP 2019 - 2023

Following a public consultation, we published our plans for the next four years.

### DISABILITY CONFIDENT EMPLOYER

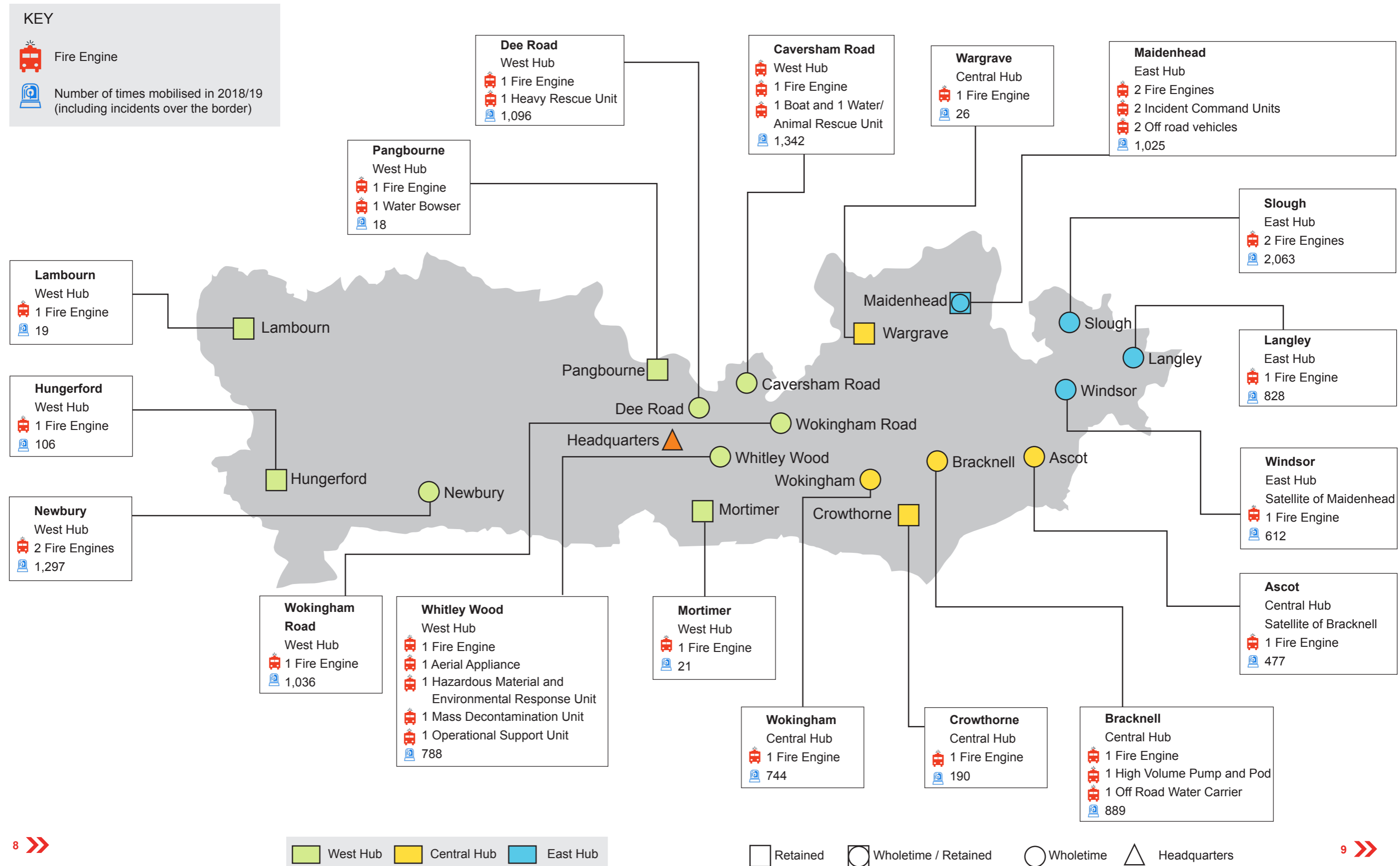
In February 2019, our Service was awarded the Disability Confident Employer accreditation, which supports employers to make the most of the talents people with disabilities can bring to the workplace.



### YOUNG FIREFIGHTERS CELEBRATE SUCCESS

38 cadets completed the course, which ran during term-time at Crowthorne, Maidenhead, Whitley Wood and Newbury Fire Stations.

# RESPONSE RESOURCE MAP FOR RBFRS





## » OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS 2018-19



7,949

Emergency incidents responded to



972

Number of primary fires



1,213

Number of secondary fires



501

Special services (road traffic collision)



1,336

Special services (other)



11,267

Number of Safe and Well Visits delivered



1,142

Number of Full Fire Safety Audits carried out



100%

of domestic respondents satisfied with service



100%

of commercial respondents satisfied with service



72.5%

of occasions we responded within 10 minutes



99%

of eligible staff successfully completing fitness test



4.1%

Working time lost to staff sickness across all groups



92.3%

Compliant spend as a % of overall spend



## » OUR PERFORMANCE

In order to monitor performance to ensure we are working towards our Annual Objectives and IRMP commitments, a number of performance measures were agreed by the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the Annual Plan 2018-19. These measures monitor the delivery of our statutory obligations and services we provide, along with how key resources are managed, including staff, finance and health and safety.

Performance is monitored on a quarterly basis by the Strategic Performance Board and by the Audit and Governance Committee. Our year end performance against the Corporate Measures can be seen on page 34.

During 2018-19, our focus continued on providing Safe and Well Visits to those who are at heightened risk of dying or being injured as a result of an accidental dwelling fire. We continued our work with partners to identify those most at risk and used local knowledge and other data sources. We were able to deliver 11,267 visits – almost 2,500 more than in 2017-18. We have exceeded our IRMP commitment to deliver 19,000 Safe and Well Visits, by almost 1,000, from April 2017 to March 2019.

Fire Safety Inspecting Officers completed 1,142 full fire safety audits in premises falling under the Regulatory Reform Order 2005 and 63.8% of these were found to be

satisfactory and complying with fire safety regulations. The Regulatory Reform Order outlines our duty to enforce fire safety in non-domestic premises.

During 2018-19, 10 new Fire Safety Inspecting Officers (FSIOs) have been undergoing intensive training. As they become more experienced they will be inspecting more complex properties identified in the risk based inspection programme, and we will expect to see the proportion of satisfactory inspections reduce. Further information about this can be found on pages 20-21.

In addition to conducting full fire safety audits, the FSIOs are following up actions on non-compliant premises and undertaking our statutory duties in relation to building regulations, other building consultations and licensing. These actions will be captured in the 2019-20 Corporate Measures.

In 2018-19, there were 7,949 emergency incidents within Berkshire, which is an increase of 498 on the previous year.





## » OUR PERFORMANCE



The largest increase was in the number of secondary fires (these are generally small outdoor fires, not involving people or property) as there were 1,213 fires, 286 more than the previous year. The hot dry summer in 2018, contributed to the increase in the number of these fires.

The Service responded to emergency incidents in under 10 minutes on 72.5% of occasions, against a target of 75%. This is a reduction of 0.3 percentage points, compared to 2017-18, but with more emergency incidents being attended. The target was exceeded in both December and March. Adverse weather conditions,

such as the hot summer, impact on this response time as it is often harder to locate outdoor fires and travel time may be increased to the more rural locations of these incidents.

The proportion of occasions when wholtime crews turnout within 90 seconds improved from 87.6% in 2017-18 to 90.4% this year, exceeding the 90% target. Further information about this work can be found on page 14.

Crewing of Retained Duty System (RDS) fire engines has improved as the year has progressed. Although we've missed the target for the year by 26.4 percentage points, as the year progressed the availability of the RDS fire engines had improved from 32.4% in Q1 to 42.4% in Q4. This is due to recruitment, training, development and retention of RDS firefighters. You can read more about this on page 16.

Every year we set targets for our performance to ensure we are delivering what we have promised in our Corporate Plan and IRMP and Annual Plan. We are transparent in the way we report on our



performance, as well as in our governance processes. We do all this to ensure that we demonstrate how effective we are at preventing and protecting against potential risk and responding to incidents to ensure that we provide value for money to the communities that we serve.

### Audits

Nine internal audits were conducted in 2018-19: Capital Investment Strategy, Facilities, Firefighter Pension Administration, Vehicle Disposal, Recruitment Practices, Risk Management and Governance, GDPR Compliance, Key Financial Controls, Payroll Provider. One further audit (VAT and PAYE) has been carried over to Q1 2019-20. All audit actions are monitored through the Strategic Performance Board and Audit and Governance Committee.

### Statement of Assurance

The annual [Statement of Assurance](#) is produced to formally confirm to government, stakeholders and the communities we serve the adequacy of arrangements for the effective management of financial, governance and operational matters in RBFRS.

The Statement confirms the extent to which the requirement of the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#) have been met.

The [Statement of Assurance](#) formally confirms the adequacy of

our arrangements for the effective management of financial, governance and operational matters.

### Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMIFCRS) Inspection

In January 2019, our Service was inspected by HMICFRS, with the report being published in June 2019. A graded judgement of performance will be provided as part of two reports: our own individual graded judgement and a national report on fire and rescue services as a whole, which will be published later in the year.

We will proceed with our continuous improvement programme in anticipation of the outcomes and following report publication, the report will be assessed for any necessary changes to our existing action plans.





## >> ENSURING A SWIFT AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE

In the Corporate Plan and IRMP 2015 – 2019, one of the Fire Authority’s Strategic Commitments is to ensure a swift and effective response when called to emergencies.

To ensure that RBFRS responds as quickly as possible and with appropriate resources, below are two case studies highlighting the approach taken to improve mobilisation times and safeguarding procedures.



### Ensuring swift mobilisation

To track performance against this Commitment, the time taken for RBFRS firefighters to arrive at every incident is measured, with an aim to attend within 10 minutes. This includes the time taken from answering the emergency call to the arrival time of the first fire engine.

During this year, this target was met on 72.5% of occasions, which was below the specified target of 75%. However, several changes have been made at a local and countywide level which have helped to reduce response times.

Following the establishment of three Hubs (West, Central and East) to bring together the delivery of Prevention, Protection and Response services in the County, lead officers for Response performance were appointed to analyse data and look at areas to make improvements.

The first area that was looked at was how our resources are deployed to incidents by Control staff in Thames Valley Fire Control Service. The mobilisation system and call handling measures were analysed to see if the time taken for Control staff to deploy crews to an incident could be made more efficient.



From there the lead officers looked at turnout times – the amount of time taken from fire crews being notified of the incident to them crewing the fire engine to leave the fire station. Wholetime crews are expected to mobilise within 90 seconds, and on-call (retained) crews have different targets, between 360 and 480 seconds depending on the station.

Local management at each station stressed the need to prioritise a swift mobilisation, even when fire crews were away from their fire stations undertaking community engagement activities, such as school visits, Safe and Well Visits and training. This has led to significant improvements, with wholetime turnout times improving from 80.5% under 90 seconds in 2017-18, to 90.4% in 2018-19.

The time it takes for crews to travel to an incident is difficult to influence. It can depend on a number of factors, most notably the proximity of the nearest station, which has been analysed as part of the IRMP process, with the aim to ensure that Berkshire residents receive a swift response no matter where they live in the County.

### Safeguarding those most at risk

The Service is extremely committed to safeguarding and in the last four years, we have increased the amount of safeguarding referrals made by 504%. Whilst we do not have a statutory duty to report concerns, we do have a duty of care to the people of Royal Berkshire and safeguarding them ensures that we support our commitment

to contribute to a wider health, safety and wellbeing agenda.

In 2018, two of our Fire Safety Inspecting Officers visited a property in Reading following concerns about the fire safety compliance and the conditions of the individuals there. Following this, a safeguarding referral was made and in conjunction with the Council and Home Office, the owner of the property was served notice and is likely to be prosecuted.

During 2018-19, we have signposted 252 safeguarding referrals through to one of our six Berkshire Local Authorities (in comparison to 50 referrals in 2015/16). In 2017-18, a Corporate Measure around our safeguarding provision was introduced. In 2018-19, 100% of all safeguarding referrals met the commitment to report them within 24 hours of contact with the individual. Our robust safeguarding provision is helping keep the people of Berkshire safe.







## >> PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT SERVICE

When the Fire Authority set out its Vision for the next four years, it stressed the need to ensure our Service is effective and efficient for the people it serves. Below are three case studies highlighting some of the work that has gone on to improve outcomes for Berkshire's communities.

### Creating a more resilient on-call (retained) workforce

On-call firefighters provide an important contribution to the services we deliver.

Although they are not based at fire stations, on-call firefighters usually live or work within 6-8 minutes of Berkshire's seven on-call fire stations and are ready to respond in their communities' time of need and provide crucial resilience in support of their wholetime colleagues.

During the past year, the Service has made a number of improvements to the way that the on-call (retained) system operates.

Crewing availability – the amount of time that on-call crews are available to respond

to incidents has been analysed. Although the target of 60% availability hasn't been met during the last year, a number of improvements have been identified which will help the Service to meet this target moving forward.

An on-call firefighter recruitment campaign has gathered speed, recruiting an additional 10 on-call firefighters to the Service, with a particular focus on those who can provide cover during daytime hours, when we find it more difficult to crew an on-call fire appliances. We have also looked to increase the diversity and inclusion of our workforce by reaching out to new groups.

Despite the increase in recruitment, there is a time delay before the new recruits are ready to respond to incidents. Attention has increasingly been on providing training within a reasonable amount of time to enable the new recruits to ride the fire engine with the rest of the crew and continue their development.

Since September 2018, on-call firefighters have been training with nearby wholetime watches and have also been taking part in joint operational assurance exercises. As well as sharing knowledge and expertise, this has given on-call firefighters the chance to train with different people,



equipment, appliances and utilising different facilities.

A working group has been established involving regular communication with on-call stations to analyse other areas where improvements can be made.

### New firefighters serving the Thames Valley

21 new firefighters went on duty in the Thames Valley in September after completing an intensive training course run collaboratively between our Service and Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service.

The 12-week course was run at the Fire Service College in Moreton-in-Marsh following an extremely competitive selection process, with 14 posts available in Berkshire and seven in Oxfordshire.

As staff in both Services are working together on a regular basis, this joint

training course was an opportunity to share best practice and improve the way fire crews work together right from the beginning of their careers.

A further six firefighters joined RBFRS in May 2018, following an eight-week course at the Fire Service College and a three-week consolidation course in the Service. This recruitment has further strengthened operational capability.

### Summer outdoor fires

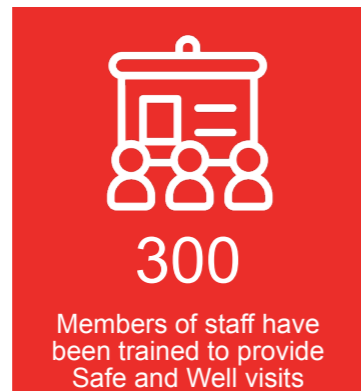
Over the summer of 2018, we experienced some of the hottest weather in the UK on record. The heatwave saw soaring temperatures across much of the UK, including Berkshire, throughout June and July. With the warm weather there were a high number of incidents of fires in the open. Over the two months we attended over 225 outdoor fires, most notably in Colnbrook, Datchet, Holyport and Little Marlow.





## >> PROMOTING COMMUNITY SAFETY

The first Strategic Commitment outlined in the Fire Authority’s Corporate Plan and IRMP 2015 – 2019, is that RBFRS will provide education and advice on how to prevent fires and other emergencies. Here is some information about the delivery of Safe and Well visits and safety campaigns during the last year.



### Safe and Well Visits

In 2018-19, we have continued to offer Safe and Well Visits, which are home visits to those most vulnerable within our communities. By working with other agencies such as care providers, health practitioners, carers and other agencies who already visit people in their own homes, we can help people to live safer and more independent lives.

We do this via a referral pathway, which allows our partners to request a Safe and Well Visit. In addition we have an Adults at Risk Programme, where free training is offered to professionals across Berkshire on how they can work with us to protect people from fire in the home, and we also present at a wide variety of events and conferences.

A delegate at the Royal Borough of

Windsor and Maidenhead safeguarding conference, said: “Since this training I have had contact with the fire service. This has helped me to talk to individuals about the risks they are taking within their home.”

“I have also used their service to implement additional smoke detectors within a property, including visual sensors for a gentleman that has a hearing impairment, a shake sensor (that operates under a pillow at night), fire retardant bedding and night wear.”

As a result of streamlining our processes over the last 12 months, we have exceeded our target for our two Corporate Measures for providing Safe and Well Visits to those at heightened risk of dying or being injured in the event of an accidental fire in the home.



We continue to build a capable Safe and Well workforce. Safe and Well visits are carried out by trained firefighters, Safe and Well Technicians and in some cases, volunteers. The visit expands the scope of its predecessor, the ‘Home Fire Safety Check’ as it involves the identification of, and response to, health and wellbeing issues in addition to fire risk reduction.

### Promoting safer communities

Throughout the last year, we have worked positively alongside our partners to promote safer communities in Royal Berkshire.

Following the identification of local risk through our [IRMP Service Redesign Prevention Evidence Base](#), and delivery of services locally through our Hub model, we have focused on groups who are most at risk from specific risks.

Road safety and water safety are two specific initiatives that have been promoted, as they were identified in our IRMP for 2015 – 2019 as being local risks due to the number of waterways and major roads in the County.

In addition to regular safety messaging issued through our social media channels, in April 2018 our Service ran a range of activities across Berkshire to support the National Fire Chief Council’s Drowning Prevention Water Safety Week. Every year the Service takes part in Safe Drive Stay Alive, a road safety campaign run by emergency services that targets young drivers and has been working with Thames Valley partners with a view to offering the Biker Down course to motorcyclists and motorcycle clubs in Berkshire.



## >> FOCUS ON FIRE SAFETY

One of the Fire Authority's Strategic Commitments in the Fire Authority's Corporate Plan and IRMP 2015 – 2019 is to ensure appropriate fire safety standards in buildings. Here is a summary of steps we have taken in the last year in this area.



### Fire safety ways of working

In the past year, RBFRS has been developing new efficient and effective ways of working under its Protection remit, which includes fire investigation.

Significant progress has been made to look at the fire safety legal enforcement and investigation methods we use, ensuring the safety of the people of Berkshire. Whilst we will always work with business owners to support, promote and ensure fire safety standards in premises, if we find that anyone is being put at risk by poor fire safety standards, we will use our enforcement powers and prosecute.

In line with our IRMP, we have focused our efforts on types of businesses where there is intelligence that standards may not be satisfactory, and higher risk buildings, such as those where people sleep and/or are unfamiliar with the premises.

Close partnership working with Local

Authorities has enhanced a co-ordinated and consistent approach to managing fire safety. During 2018, Fire Safety Inspecting Officers have been using appropriate rooms in local authority buildings across the County for Police and Criminal Evidence Act interviews. This new approach has delivered closer working arrangements with our local authority partners, provided professional and suitable premises for Responsible Persons to attend such interviews and opportunities for other Fire Safety Inspecting Officers to attend, observe and learn. We anticipate this will develop and improve our overall enforcement action success rates of cases who have failed to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

In addition, a full review was carried out of the Primary Authority Scheme, which supports better local regulation and provides business with robust and assured



advice being given to our partners.

### Protection activity in the past year

A total of 13 Enforcement Notices have been issued during the past year, under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. These are notices served against business premises to require them to meet adequate fire safety standards.

Additionally, last summer, having failed to comply with an enforcement notice, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority brought a successful prosecution against a landlord who put tenants' lives at serious risk in the event of fire, resulting in a substantial fine.

Two more formal cautions have also been issued and accepted by commercial premises in Slough and Lambourn, meaning they have agreed to bring fire safety provisions up to the required standard.

### Development of Fire Safety Inspecting Officers

To help meet its ongoing commitment to ensure appropriate fire safety in buildings, we have continued to invest in the development of Fire Safety Inspecting Officers (FSIOs).

A FSIO works to ensure public and business safety and reduce risk through targeted education and enforcement of fire safety legislation.

In March 2018, an additional 10 FSIOs were recruited into the Service. They were appointed for several reasons, one of which was succession planning due to the expected retirement of experienced FSIOs over the coming years and the time taken to train new FSIOs.

All 10 of the FSIOs immediately began studying to obtain certificates in fire safety at the same time as completing their roles. This has ensured that they are gaining a mix of theoretical and practical experience as they continue their development.

As part of our Bursary Scheme (which you can read about on the next page), several of our staff are also studying for Masters degrees in Fire Engineering which will not only assist their personal development and expertise, but will bring increased knowledge into the Service.

Over the coming year it is anticipated that the FSIOs will complete a Level 4 Diploma in Fire Safety, as well as carrying out inspections of more complex properties in the County.





## >> DEVELOPING AND VALUING OUR PEOPLE

The purpose of our [People Strategy](#) is to support our staff to become the best public servants they can be, creating a workforce that can deliver an efficient and effective service on behalf of the Fire Authority, to manage all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the people of Berkshire.



### Leadership Development Programme

The Leadership Development Programme is an ongoing scheme as part of our People Strategy to develop the skills and teamwork of our future leaders. The Programme is divided into three sections: Leading Self, Leading Others and Leading the Business.

### Middle Managers Development Programme

In the 2017/18 Annual Report, we highlighted the successes of the Middle Managers Development Programme, which began in October 2017.

The Programme reinforces the importance of a working as one team, strengthening relationships between staff working in different areas of the Service and working to different terms and conditions.

Evaluation of the course demonstrated

that it was well received and either refreshed existing skills and knowledge or gave managers new skills, tools and techniques to support them in undertaking their roles.

### Supervisory Level Development Programme

In March 2019, the Supervisory Level Development Programme began with two pilot cohorts. The Programme follows the same structure of Leading Self, Leading Others and Leading the Business.

The course will continue throughout 2019, with the expectation that more staff will join the upcoming courses following feedback from the pilot cohorts. There are early positive signs that this is improving cross-functional and cross-Service working, further developing the service that is provided to the people of Royal Berkshire.



### Bursary Scheme

In early 2018, the Service introduced bursary funding for staff to enable them to undertake further education. The scheme enables staff to gain additional qualifications, enhance their knowledge and skillsets, as well as providing a path for personal development. Investing in staff development and funding a course can, in turn, deliver a better and more effective service to the public.

One of our members of staff who received partial funding, said: "Since 2010, I had wanted to complete a Masters and so I thought why not apply. Since receiving the funding, I have been able to continue on the course with a much lesser financial burden...I know that the Masters course will also assist me in my role."

Since the Bursary Scheme was refreshed, there have been over 15 applications received from across the Service covering a range of topics, including a Masters in Business Administration.

### Awards Ceremony

RBFRS celebrates the success of our staff at the annual Awards Ceremony. We have 11 awards categories that offer the chance to recognise those who have gone the extra mile.

Amongst our many incredible categories is our Shane Burton award for a career devoted to public service. In September, one of our Thames Valley Fire Control Service Operators received this award for his commitment to the people of Royal Berkshire and the Thames Valley for over 40 years' service. The recognition meant a great deal to the recipient, who on the night said: "...to receive this award is absolutely amazing. I started in the Service when I was 19 years old and finish at 60 years old and it's been an absolute honour."

In addition, this event offers the opportunity to celebrate staff who have devoted 20 years to public service. They receive their Long Service Medal or Long Service and Good Conduct Medal under Royal Warrant with the permission of Her Majesty The Queen.



## >> PROMOTING A HEALTHIER WORKFORCE

In our [People Strategy](#), we set out our objective to support both the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our staff. Our continuous development of the Health and Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy and Action Plans throughout 2018-19 have supported the delivery of this objective.

Since April 2018:



Progress in the last year has been promising with a reduction in sickness absence. In 2017-18, 4.8% of working time across all staff groups was lost to sickness compared to 4.1% this year.

During this year there has been a particular focus on mental health to help improve pathways to support and tackle stigma in the workplace.

All staff have been required to complete a two hour mental health training course, which will be followed by additional training for line managers and mental health first aid courses.

As part of Mind's Blue Light Programme, there is a network of Blue Light Champions within the Service. These volunteers are dedicated to raising awareness in the workplace and helping to connect those who experience mental

health difficulties with sources of support. The number of champions now stands at over 40 across a variety of departments, helping to provide a positive movement for change. A successful part of this role is the sharing of personal stories which has enabled colleagues to talk more openly about their own experiences.

Of the eligible operational staff, 99% passed their fitness test in 2018/19. In order to ensure that operational staff pass their fitness test a number of measures are in place, including:

- Allocated time for crews to do fitness training
- Fitness equipment on stations
- Trained fitness personnel on each watch, at each station
- A trained Movement Specialist who supports all personnel across the Service



If operational staff do fail their fitness test then they are supported by our Fitness and Health Advisor who provides them with tailored individual support.

Investment has begun to replace existing fitness equipment on fire stations. This means equipment remains fit for purpose to enable staff to maintain the required fitness levels. The fitness of our workforce directly relates to the service delivered to the people of Royal Berkshire.

Our staff also have access to Benenden, a discretionary healthcare service. During the second full year of provision, 72 cases were supported by Benenden, which means quicker diagnosis or treatment for the employee and a potential reduction in sickness absence and associated costs for the Service.

To encourage staff to make positive lifestyle choices, we regularly run health promotion campaigns. These vary across the year and have included Time to Talk Day, Mental Health Awareness Week, sun safety advice, winter wellness advice and Men's Health Week. Twice a year staff are given the opportunity to join the Cycle to Work Scheme.





## >> MODERNISING OUR SERVICE

In our [Strategic Asset Investment Framework](#), the Fire Authority has set out how we will maintain and renew our vital capital assets. The efficiency of these assets has been highlighted as having a significant impact on our revenue budget. Our collaboration work in sharing of facilities, running joint procurement arrangements and the joint Thames Valley Fire Control Service is important in enabling us to provide the best possible service to the people of Royal Berkshire.



**19 months**  
For the refurbishment of the Firehouse, from start to finish



**37**  
New fire engines arriving in the Thames Valley over 4 years



**£200,000**  
Estimated savings from a collaborative grounds maintenance contract

### Refurbishment of the Firehouse

In November, the Service's Firehouse re-opened following investment from the Fire Authority. The Firehouse is one of the Service's key training facilities in Berkshire, offering firefighters the opportunity to train in as realistic conditions as possible, including simulating fires in houses and commercial buildings.

The building underwent work to re-configure the layout providing a contemporary facility for firefighters' training. This included opening the loft space to fully utilise the whole building. The work included an upgrade of the control systems – enhancing the safety and monitoring of training.

The critical changes significantly improved the way in which firefighters train, enabling them to continue to provide the highest quality of service to the communities across Royal Berkshire.

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

During the last year, a contract was agreed to deliver new PPE into the Service.

Fit-for-purpose PPE is essential in enabling our operational staff to do their job effectively and remain protected at all times.

The new PPE will replace the helmet, tunic, leggings, boots, gloves and flash hoods currently in use, with an updated design that makes use of the latest



innovations in fabric technology to offer maximum comfort, manoeuvrability and protection.

The garments have been specially selected for its suitability for the varying roles and activities faced by firefighters and, for the first time, a rescue jacket will be included to give a choice of protection level depending of the incident being attended.

The new equipment will be delivered through a collaborative PPE framework. The selection process for the new kit was led by Kent Fire and Rescue Service with the assistance of all Services (including RBFRS), who signed up to use the framework.

The new equipment is expected to arrive in the summer of 2019.

### Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs)

In summer 2018, new MDTs were fitted in the front of every fire engine across Berkshire to provide relevant operational and risk information to firefighters.

The system sends live status updates to the control room and other operational crews that are on their way or already at an incident. It also gives additional safety data, for example: chemicals stored on site, details on the occupancy of the premises, mapping details, which includes street and road names, as well as the location of other RBFRS resources.

The information that will be shared to crews through the MDTs will help them to decide how to respond to an incident in advance of arrival, enabling them to work more efficiently and effectively.





## >>WORKING IN COLLABORATION



### Arrival of new fire engines in Newbury and Slough

A further three new fire engines were deployed at fire stations in Royal Berkshire in August, with two operating from Newbury and one from Slough Fire Station.

The vehicles were delivered as part of the second year of a collaborative project run in a partnership between Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service, Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service and RBFRS, which will deliver a combined total of 37 new fire engines to the Thames Valley over four years.

At Newbury, both existing fire engines were replaced by the new Volvo vehicles, built by Emergency One (UK), whereas at

Slough, one new vehicle joined another Volvo vehicle already in service, after it was delivered last year.

The new fire engines form part of our programme to modernise an aging fleet with state of the art vehicles, designed for current needs and incorporating the latest technology.

The deployment of the Volvos has seen a step change in the equipment carried by the fleet. By the end of 2019 half of the fleet will have transitioned to battery hydraulic rescue tools and the ongoing fleet replacement will see transition to battery powered tools across the whole fleet within 5 years.

### Aerial Ladder Platform

The purchase of a new Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) will represent a significant



increase in our ability to respond to incidents in difficult to reach areas. The new appliance will have a vastly increased reach of 45 metres (vertical), compared to the current appliance which can reach 32 metres (vertical).

Our Service has successfully negotiated a joint procurement process alongside Oxfordshire County Fire and Rescue Service to purchase aerial ladder platforms for savings in the region of 5-8%, which can be reinvested elsewhere.

Angloco Ltd was awarded the contract for the ALP, which is expected to be delivered in the summer of 2020, replacing the existing ALP based at Whitley Wood Fire Station.

### Crowthorne Community Fire Station

In July, Bracknell Forest Council approved planning permission for the County's second tri-service community station. The building will offer a shared location for RBFRS, Thames Valley Police (TVP) and South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS), as well as improved facilities for the local community and firefighters alike.

Following the popularity of the bookable meeting rooms at Hungerford and Wokingham Fire Stations, a community room has been included in the plans for Crowthorne. This further delivers on our commitment to place fire stations at the heart of the communities they serve.

In April 2019, Crowthorne firefighters relocated to Wellington College for the Fire Station rebuild to get underway. Due

to the close proximity to the high street, the relocation will ensure that operational response to emergency incidents can continue to be maintained until they return to the new build fire station, which is anticipated to be in summer 2020.

### Contract procurement helps build efficiency

As investment is made in these vital areas, it is driven by a Strategic Commitment to ensure that RBFRS provides a good value for money Service to the public.

This is supported by the range of cross-Service mix of critical contracts RBFRS Procurement has secured over the last 12 months, with each new contract comes an opportunity to drive savings for the County.

One highlight, which also illustrates the vast programme of collaborative activity we are engaged in with our neighbouring emergency services, is a grounds maintenance agreement. This has been negotiated in collaboration with Thames Valley Police, which achieved an estimated £200,000 of savings.

Other vital contracts procured during the course of 2018/19, include a core skills mental health manager training service, and an incident command simulations software supply.



## >> BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE SERVICE

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our Service is committed to supporting and making a positive difference to the communities we serve. Equality and diversity is about understanding differences and ensuring that the right people receive the right services.

In 2017, RBFRS' Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Forum was formed. One of the main purposes of the Forum is to develop an inclusive culture by raising general awareness of diversity matters. A public consultation was run to receive feedback on proposed EDI objectives for the Service. The EDI Forum recommended that the Objectives should focus on the broad areas of inclusiveness, leadership, knowing our communities and culture. The published Objectives are available [on our website](#).

The purpose of setting Equality Objectives is to strengthen our performance in meeting the general equality duty and ensure that we are making year-on-year progress in advancing equality and human rights for all protected groups.



7  
Interns have joined us through the Change 100 Programme



Silver Award  
In Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme



12  
New volunteers have been recruited in past year

### Disability Confident

In February 2019, RBFRS was awarded the Disability Confident Employer accreditation, which supports employers to make the most of the talents people with disabilities can bring to the workplace.

As part of this, we will:

- Communicate and promote vacancies;
- Anticipate and make reasonable

adjustments for those with a disability; and

- Support any existing employee who acquires a disability or long-term health condition, enabling them to stay in work.

One of the key objectives of the RBFRS People Strategy is to increase the diversity of the workforce to better represent and therefore serve the local communities.

Receiving this accreditation is recognition



of just some of the steps the Service is taking to deliver this commitment.

### Encouraging more women to consider careers as firefighters

In line with our four EDI objectives, the Service has taken action to increase diversity and create a more inclusive culture, where the best candidates are able to apply for roles and feel supported, regardless of who they are.

Our female staff play a crucial role in delivering our services to the people of Berkshire, but one area we have been focusing on is the number of women applying for and successfully becoming firefighters. Like many other fire and rescue services across the Country, only a small proportion of operational staff in RBFRS' workforce are female.

During this year staff directly involved with the recruitment process have been speaking to current female firefighters, and the wider community to identify barriers which are deterring female applicants. This has led to a campaign which aims to reach out to and encourage more women to consider applying for on-call or wholtime firefighter roles and ensure that they are given exactly the same opportunities as their male counterparts throughout the recruitment process.

Although these initiatives are not expected to bring immediate results, it is hoped that this work will go a long way towards ensuring that no one is deterred from applying for an operational role on the basis of their gender.





## >> BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE SERVICE



### Apprentices thrive in fire and rescue service

Since we launched our Apprenticeship Scheme in August 2017, a number of young people have been gaining and developing valuable skills and experience in their fire and rescue service apprenticeships.

This year, the Service has increased the number of apprenticeship posts from three to four, in the Human Resources, Resourcing and Development, Business Support and Facilities teams.

Some of the apprentices who have taken part in the Scheme have gone on to obtain permanent posts within the Service, or some have extended their apprenticeship to gain the next level of their qualification.

The Service's apprentices have contributed to increasing diversity, and are an excellent indication of how we are committed to developing and valuing staff, and the benefits that it brings both to individuals and to the Service.

### Volunteering

Volunteer activity has increased over the last year. New roles have been developed, which has led to an increase in applications from prospective volunteers. These new opportunities have enabled the volunteer programme to appeal to a more diverse audience. We have also been able to diversify volunteer activities, and bring new skills into the organisation, for example; volunteer photographers have allowed us to capture high quality images we would not otherwise have the capacity



to create.

In the last year we have more than doubled the number of active volunteers, with 12 new volunteers including:

- Four new volunteer photographers supporting RBFRS to capture images for the website, internal communication and social media.
- Five new Young Fire Fighter Volunteer Instructors supporting three out of four units.
- Two Community Safety Volunteers who promote safety messages, support with events and help with Safe and Well appointments.
- One Outreach Vehicle Driver who will support with partnership and internal events.

Existing volunteers have continued to support RBFRS to reach a wider audience across Berkshire through the following activities:

- Community talks to local community groups to raise awareness of, and to generate Safe and Well referrals.
- Volunteering in hospitals.
- Ensuring all oxygen users are offered Safe and Well Visits.
- Conducting Safe and Well Visits in low risk households.
- Fundraising and awareness raising at local events including open days, car washes, Royal Ascot and other community partnership events.

### Armed Forces Covenant

In July, our Service was awarded the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition

Scheme Silver award. This comes as a result of our support to those that are part of the Armed Forces community, after signing the Armed Forces Covenant and achieving the Bronze Award in February 2018.

The Covenant pledges to support the Armed Forces by promoting the fact that we are an Armed Forces friendly organisation, as well as working with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) to establish an employment pathway for people leaving the forces.

### Change 100 Programme

In 2017, we collaborated with Leonard Cheshire's [Change100](#) Programme to work with talented graduates with disabilities or long-term health issues on an intern Programme.

Since, our partnership, we have taken on seven interns through the Programme, with two gaining full time employment through the Service. We continue to work with Leonard Cheshire with the plan to have more graduates join the Service on the 100-day internship in the coming summer.

This Programme has enabled us to be credible in our commitment to attract talent and increase diversity in our workforce.





## » CORPORATE MEASURES

Here is a summary of our Corporate Measures and how we have performed this year.

In addition, we publish our [Response Standard and key performance measures](#) on our website every month.

Measure	2018/2019 Target	2018/2019 Actual
Number of fire deaths in accidental dwelling fires	0	1
Number of fire casualties in accidental dwelling fires	20 max	50
Percentage of safeguarding referrals made to local authorities within 24 hours	100%	100%
The number of deliberate primary fires	Monitor	150
The number of deliberate secondary fires	Monitor	285
<b>Prevention</b>		
Number of Safe and Well visits (S&W's) delivered to those who are at heightened risk of dying in the event of an accidental dwelling fire	8,200	8,383
Number of S&W's delivered to those who are at heightened risk of having an accidental dwelling fire and being injured as a result	2500	2,884
Percentage of priority home safety referrals, where there has been a threat or incidence of arson, completed within 48 hours	100%	76.3%
Percentage of priority home safety referrals, where there is a significant heightened risk of an individual having a fire in their property, completed within 48-hours	Monitor	Data unavailable
<b>Protection</b>		
Total Number of Full Fire Safety Audits carried out	1400	1,142
Percentage of audits where the results were satisfactory	50% max	63.8%
Percentage of Audits requiring informal activity	45% min	23.5%
Percentage of Audits requiring formal activity	5% min	2.7%
Percentage success rate when cases go to court	4:1	1:1
<b>Response</b>		
Percentage of occasions where the first fire engine arrives at an emergency incident within 10 minutes from time the emergency call was answered	75%	72.5%
Percentage of full shifts where there is adequate crewing on all 'wholetime' frontline fire engines	100%	99.6%



Measure	2018/2019 Target	2018/2019 Actual
Percentage of hours where there is adequate crewing on all retained frontline pumping appliances (based on 24/7 crewing)	60%	33.6%
<b>Customer feedback</b>		
Percentage of domestic respondents satisfied with the overall service	100%	100%
Percentage of commercial respondents satisfied with the overall service	95%	100%
Percentage of respondents satisfied with the services with regards to Fire Safety Audits	90%	98.4%
<b>Human Resources and Learning and Development</b>		
Percentage of working time lost to sickness, across all staff groups	3%	4.1%
Percentage of eligible operational staff successfully completing fitness test	100%	99.0%
Percentage of eligible staff with Personal Development Appraisals	100%	97.0%
Percentage of eligible operational staff in qualification	100%	98.3%
<b>Health and Safety</b>		
All injury accidents including RIDDOR**	4 RIDDOR 72 Accidents	7 RIDDOR 67 Accidents
<b>Finance and Procurement</b>		
Percentage of spend subject to competition	85%	92.3%
Compliant spend as a % of overall spend.	100%	100%
<b>Freedom of Information</b>		
Number of Information Commissioner assessments finding that the Service has breached Information Rights Legislation (Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations).	0	0
Number of Information Commissioner assessments finding that the Service has breached Data Protection Legislation (Data Protection Act and forthcoming legislation)	0	1

\*\*RIDDOR is the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013. Under RIDDOR we have a duty to report certain events, those events being accidents that led to a person being unfit for their normal work for more than 7 days, or 'specified injuries' which are more serious types of injuries. These include injuries such as broken bones, crush injuries and amputations.

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