

# Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

Annual Report  
» 2025-2026



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## » Welcome

**W**elcome to the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) Annual Report for 2025-26.

This year has been one of both achievement and challenge, and in many ways, an extremely difficult one. We were deeply affected by the tragic loss of Jennie Logan and Martyn Sadler, firefighters, and Dave Chester, a member of the public, at the Bicester Motion fire in May 2025. This devastating incident was felt across the entire fire and rescue sector. For us in Berkshire, our loss was especially personal. Martyn served alongside us for more than 15 years in a range of roles and was a dedicated public servant, known for his professionalism and warmth. He is greatly missed, and we remain committed to honouring his legacy within our Service.

Above all, we recognise the dedication, professionalism and commitment of our staff and volunteers, who continue to work tirelessly to keep our communities safe.

Over the past year, we have strengthened how we manage risk across Berkshire, further developing our targeted, evidence-based approach to prevention, protection and response. This includes increasing our focus on those most at risk from fire, enhancing our preparedness for emerging risks such as wildfires, and improving how we use data and insight to inform decision-making.

We have continued to invest in our people, equipment and infrastructure, including the opening of our new training facility and the introduction of

new fire appliances. These investments ensure our teams are well prepared to respond to increasingly complex and evolving risks.

This year also marked 10 years of collaboration through the Thames Valley Fire Control Service – a significant milestone that demonstrates the value of strong partnerships and shared ambition.

We are proud of the progress made in strengthening our culture, embedding a safe, supportive and inclusive working environment where our people feel valued and able to thrive. This remains fundamental to delivering the high-quality service our communities expect.

At the same time, we recognise the importance of financial sustainability. We have continued to improve efficiency, modernise our systems, and ensure we make the best use of our resources while maintaining the level of service our communities rely on.

Our latest HMICFRS inspection reflects this progress, with the Service rated 'Good' in the majority of areas, demonstrating the strength of our people and the effectiveness of our approach.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our staff, the support of our partners, and the trust of the communities we serve.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on continuing to improve, learning from experience, and ensuring we are ready to meet the changing needs of Berkshire – now and into the future.



**Councillor  
Jeff Brooks**

Chair,  
Royal Berkshire  
Fire Authority



**Mark Arkwell**

Chief Fire Officer  
and Chief Executive,  
Royal Berkshire Fire  
and Rescue Service

## » Who We Are

**R**oyal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service exists to keep our communities safe by preventing incidents, protecting people and property, and responding effectively when emergencies happen.

We serve the Royal County of Berkshire, covering approximately 488 square miles from Langley in the east to Lambourn in the west. Our 12 wholetime and five on-call fire stations provide a 24-hour service, 365 days a year, supporting a diverse population of around 959,000 people.

Our highly-trained crews respond to a wide range of incidents, including fires, road and rail collisions, hazardous material incidents, water and aviation emergencies, collapsed structures, and complex rescues. Alongside this, we work proactively with schools, businesses, residents and community groups to raise awareness and reduce risk – helping to prevent emergencies before they happen.

We also work in partnership with Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire fire and rescue services through the Thames Valley Fire Control Service – a shared emergency call handling centre that supports a coordinated and effective response across the region.

Our people are our most important asset. Their professionalism, skill and commitment is essential to delivering safe, effective and reliable services to our communities. We are committed to supporting

our workforce to perform at their best, ensuring they feel valued, supported and equipped to meet the demands of a modern fire and rescue service.

At the heart of everything we do are our values. We are committed to creating a safe, supportive and inclusive Service, where high professional standards, respect and fairness are non-negotiable.

Working as one team, guided by clear priorities and a shared purpose, we are committed to delivering a modern, professional fire and rescue service that protects our communities – now and into the future.

**Our people are our most important asset. Their professionalism, skill and commitment is essential to delivering safe, effective and reliable services to our communities.**

**Safe. Supportive. Inclusive.**

# » Our Strategic Commitments

**A**s detailed in our [Annual Plan 2025-26](#), the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority has a set of Strategic Commitments that are regularly reviewed to help our Service in creating safer, more resilient communities, preventing incidents, protecting homes and businesses, and responding to emergencies, as well as creating a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for our staff.

Each of our Strategic Commitments are aligned to our overarching principles: Risk Management, Sustainability, Culture and Capability.

## Risk Management

### Prevention

We will reduce the risk to our communities through our partnership duties and prevention education activities, ensuring that our services are accessible.

### Protection

We will support those with responsibility for premises to understand their duties in ensuring the safety of all people using buildings covered by the Building Safety Act 2022 and Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, whilst ensuring that our services are accessible.

### Response

We will ensure that our people are trained and resources are located to provide the most effective response, and to have a positive impact on incidents in our communities.

### Resilience

We will ensure we are resilient and work with our partners to promote and build resilience in the communities we serve.

## Sustainability

### Sustainability

We are committed to ensuring that we provide a financially sustainable Service and take meaningful action to help address the climate emergency.

## Culture

### People

We will support our staff by providing a safe and inclusive environment for them to thrive in, building a diverse organisation that is engaged with, and accessible to, our communities.

### Culture

We will continue to embed our One Team culture, to ensure it is visible both within and outside the service to inspire trust, confidence and pride amongst our staff and within our communities.

## Capability

### Capability

We will continue to lead and manage RBFRS in accordance with good practice and national professional standards and we will continuously improve, learning from events and holding ourselves to account.

### Collaboration

We will continue to explore collaboration opportunities to ensure we deliver effective and efficient services to the people we serve.

# » Our Community Risk Management Plan

**C**entral to how we operate is our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and Corporate Plan.

This sets out how we ensure the right resources are in the right place, at the right time, to keep our communities safe.

The CRMP balances risk with available resources and outlines what RBFRS will deliver over a four-year period, supported by annual action plans. It ensures our approach is evidence-based, proportionate and focused on delivering the greatest impact.

We manage risk through an integrated approach – considering the full range of Prevention, Protection and Response activities available to us, and identifying the most effective and efficient ways to reduce risk across our communities.

**Our six key priorities for the four-year period:**

## Priority 1

We will develop our Integrated Service Delivery Strategy to meet the changing profile of risk in Berkshire due to climate change, societal and technological shifts.

## Priority 2

We will develop a Risk-Based Prevention Programme to target those most vulnerable and at-risk from emergency incidents.

## Priority 3

We will develop our response model to ensure that we are providing the most effective response to incidents within Berkshire, ensuring that it is aligned to the risks identified, sustainable and provides value for money.

## Priority 4

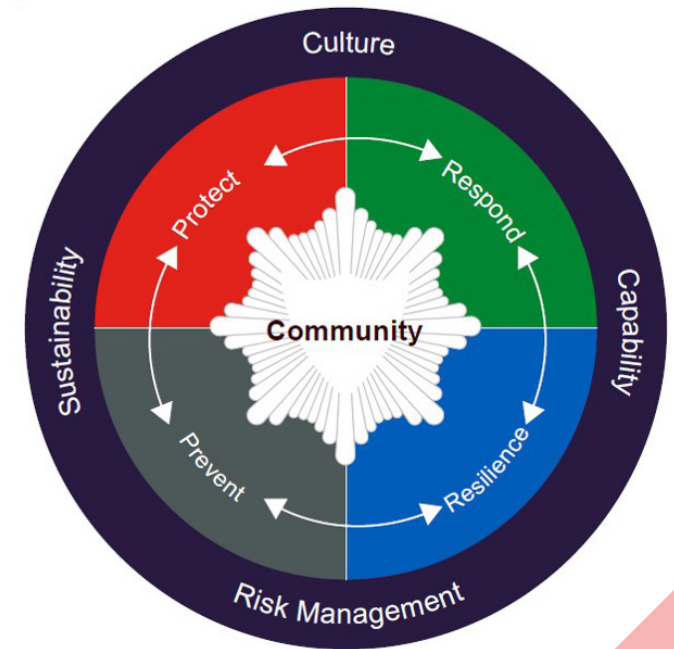
We will review the incidents that do not form part of our core statutory responsibilities, to better understand the implications for the Service in attending these incidents. Notwithstanding the review of our response and the gathering of this data, public safety will remain the primary priority of the Service.

## Priority 5

We will develop our Service to reduce the impact of fire safety issues in commercial buildings.

## Priority 6

We will maintain 19 frontline fire appliances, and a baseline service provision of 14 frontline fire appliances, utilising wholetime and on-call staff as effectively as possible, through local management.



## » Highlights in Pictures



### 10 Years of Thames Valley Fire Control

April marked ten years since the launch of the Thames Valley Fire Control Service which provides 24/7 emergency call handling for three fire and rescue services.

### Wokingham Property Manager Fined

A Wokingham property manager was ordered to pay more than £26,000 for fire safety breaches following a successful prosecution.

**April  
2025**



### Major Incident in Bicester, Oxfordshire

We were devastated by the immense loss suffered at an incident in Bicester, Oxfordshire. Our thoughts remain with the families and friends of Martyn Sadler, Jennie Logan and Dave Chester.

**May  
2025**

### Recognising our Volunteers

As part of National Volunteers Week, we took some time to thank our wonderful volunteers for everything they do at a small ceremony at Maidenhead Fire Station.

### Welcoming our Newest Cohort of Firefighters

We formally welcomed our newest cohort of 12 Wholetime Firefighters. Before their graduation, they raised more than £6,000 for the Fire Fighters Charity.



**June  
2025**



### Opening Ceremony of New Training Centre

Our new Training Centre, which was officially opened by Mr Andrew Try, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire, will help train future generations of firefighters in Berkshire.

### New Fire Engines Arrive in West Hub

Following investment from the Fire Authority, new fire engines were deployed at Newbury and Theale fire stations.

**July  
2025**

### Year Four of the Summer Internship

In August, the Service welcomed four young people from across the county as part of the Summer Internship Scheme. The Scheme encourages those who may not have considered a career in the fire and rescue sector to explore some of the many roles available to them.



**August  
2025**



### Supporting State Visits in Windsor

We supported the State Visit of the President of the United States of America, which followed a similar visit from Emmanuel Macron, President of France.

### Multi-Agency Exercise at University

White Watch crews from across the county, joined by our blue light partners, took part in our third multi-agency high-rise exercise at the University of Reading.

**September  
2025**

# » Highlights in Pictures



## National Training Exercise near Windsor

In late October, we hosted a national training exercise which involved blue light partners from across the country in Swinley Forest. The exercise tested national resilience in response to a large-scale wildfire incident, similar to the incident back in 2011.

**October  
2025**

## Excellence Recognised at Awards Ceremony

A range of outstanding achievements were recognised at the Service's Awards Ceremony, which was held on Friday, 21 November. This event, which took place at Select Car Leasing Stadium, Reading, provided an opportunity to recognise the exceptional work of staff, volunteers and partners during the past year.



**November  
2025**



## Welcoming our Newest On-call Firefighters

Growing our On-call capacity is a major focus for the Service, and we were delighted that four of our newest On-call firefighters completed their initial acquisition course in December.

## Service Revalidated with Gold Award

We are honoured to be successfully revalidated for the Gold Award in the Armed Forces Covenant's Employer Recognition Scheme for a further five years.

**December  
2025**

## Festive Fundraiser Smashes Target

Through December and early January, our staff, cadets and volunteers raised more than £8,500 for the Fire Fighters Charity. Three big collections at IKEA in Calcot, a Staff Auction and the support of the Maybank Christmas Lights event raised £5,550 while a further £3,150 was raised by crews organising local collections over the Christmas period.



**January  
2026**



## New Chief Fire Officer Appointed

Following a rigorous recruitment process, Mark Arkwell was selected as Royal Berkshire's next Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Officer. Having worked in the fire and rescue service for more than 26 years with Surrey and RBFRRS, Mark has extensive experience to bring to the role.

**February  
2026**

## 12 New Wholetime Firefighters Join

In March, we welcomed our 12 newest Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices to the Service.

## Reading Half Marathon Charity Challenge

18 of our firefighters completed the Reading Half Marathon whilst carrying a 135 ladder, raising £6,000 for Children with Cancer UK.



## March Car Wash Drive Raises Thousands

Crews, volunteers and cadets raised £9,140 for the Fire Fighters Charity during eight car washes.

**March  
2026**

# » Risk Management

## Risk Management – Improving How We Use Information and Insight

**A**s outlined in our CRMP, we use evidence and professional judgement to analyse and reduce risk in our communities. For example, this includes a focus on enhancing how we manage and use risk information to support better operational and strategic decision making. In this section we outline some of the areas that we have made progress in the way we manage risks in our communities.

### Adapting to Meet Changing Risks

**D**eveloping our response model to adapt to changing risks is outlined in Priority One of our CRMP.

As a Service we have made significant progress in strengthening our preparedness, prevention, and response to wildfire risk.

Wildfire remains a growing and complex risk within Berkshire, with incidents ranging from small-scale fires in the open to sustained, resource-intensive events affecting large geographical areas and posing risks to life, infrastructure, and the environment.

In 2025 alone, the Service responded to over 1,000 fires in the open, including 36 confirmed wildfires, highlighting both the scale and frequency of this emerging risk. In response, RBFRS undertook a comprehensive review of the 2025 wildfire season to identify key learning and drive continuous improvement across operational, prevention, and partnership activity.

A key area of focus has been enhancing operational capability. The Service has increased training provision for specialist 4x4 wildfire units, ensuring crews are equipped to operate effectively in challenging terrain and prolonged incidents. In

addition, all operational staff now receive accredited Level 1 wildfire training, improving baseline competence and ensuring a consistent and safe response across the organisation.

To further strengthen command capacity, seven Officers have been trained as Level 3 Wildfire Support Officers, enhancing tactical and strategic oversight at complex incidents.

Partnership working has also been significantly strengthened. RBFRS has established the Thames Valley Wildfire Group, bringing together fire and rescue services to enhance collaboration, interoperability, and shared learning across the region. This supports a more coordinated response to cross-border wildfire risks and aligns with national approaches through NFCC guidance.

At a local level, the Service has worked proactively with landowners to identify nine high-risk wildfire sites across Berkshire. Detailed wildfire risk plans have been developed for these locations, improving local preparedness, site-specific response plans, and risk mitigation strategies.

This risk-based approach ensures resources are targeted where they will have the greatest impact in reducing harm.

Prevention activity has also been a priority, with the

launch of targeted campaigns across the county aimed at raising public awareness of wildfire risk and promoting responsible behaviours.

This has been complemented by partnership work with NFU Mutual to develop tailored fire safety advice for farmers, recognising the specific risks associated with agricultural environments and seasonal activity.

In addition, RBFRS has advanced its approach to managing the Rural Urban Interface (RUI), where the built environment meets vegetation and open land.

RBFRS works collaboratively with local councils to help them, identify, assess, and manage these areas, supported by ongoing maintenance and upkeep plans.

This work is critical in reducing the likelihood of wildfire spread into residential and commercial areas, thereby protecting communities and infrastructure.

Collectively, these activities demonstrate a proactive, risk-based approach to wildfire management, aligning Prevention, Protection, and Response activity to reduce the likelihood and impact of wildfire incidents.

This work directly supports RBFRS's strategic objective of keeping communities safe by identifying and mitigating emerging risks, strengthening resilience, and enhancing the Service's ability to respond effectively to large-scale and complex incidents.

## » Risk Management

### Targeting Prevention Services Based on Risk

**P**rotecting the most vulnerable and at-risk in our communities from emergency incidents is vital and set out as priority two in our CRMP.

Work has been ongoing to ensure we target our Prevention services for those who are most at risk, using data and insight to ensure support reaches those who need it most.

We are doing this through the creation of a Risk-Based Prevention Programme to help us spot those who are most at-risk, so we can intervene early. This will mean working alongside partners to use our resources and capability in the most efficient and effective way.

Whilst we are actively analysing our own prevention organisational data and data from national sources, in the next stage of development we are prioritising strengthening partnership working to ensure better outcomes for people we engage with.

Through improved two-way information sharing with our partners, we believe we can create a more holistic understanding of vulnerability across our communities.

Safe and Well Visits are a key area of our prevention activity, whereby a member of RBFRRS staff attends a resident's home to assess any fire safety risks in the home, provide guidance, check smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, and signpost or refer them to partner agencies that can support with their health or wellbeing needs.

Whilst residents can self-refer for a visit, we receive a number of referrals from our partner agencies. Referrals from partners are an important way of targeting Safe and Well activity to those most at-risk, as their referrals include crucial data that has been gathered elsewhere.

Together with our own data, it forms a holistic view of a person's circumstances and potential vulnerability.

One of our key partners for sharing data is the NHS – and so we have been proactively looking at data streams between us and the wider health sector.

Within our risk management system, we have created an algorithm to ensure that we are receiving referrals for those most at-risk from fire within their system.

For example, our system highlights people who use emollient skin creams, oxygen users, smokers or people who are bed bound and may be unable to evacuate in an emergency, so that we are able to prioritise visits.

We know that GPs are a crucial contact point between vulnerable members of our community and public services, therefore we are proactively seeking to improve two-way data sharing with GPs so that we can deliver targeted interventions.

Looking ahead, we are creating a tool to map the way we mitigate our community risks against known hazards across Response, Prevention and Protection activity. This will be a key tool to provide a structured approach to managing risks based on

RBFRRS, partner and national datasets. Once this is completed, it will enable better understanding of vulnerabilities and decision-making.

By prioritising prevention interventions against assessed risks, we will deliver activities more effectively, ultimately reducing accidental fire deaths and injuries while strengthening community resilience.

# » Risk Management

## Transforming our Protection Function

A key area of progress for the Service is the transformation of our Protection function, which was reshaped to improve resilience and enhance the delivery of our fire safety services, under priority five of our CRMP.

The regulatory landscape for Fire Safety has changed significantly over the last five years, driven by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, the Building Safety Act, Fire Safety (England) Regulations, and the requirement for residential evacuation plans by April 2026. These developments have increased complexity and demand within the Protection function, and it was therefore vital. There were also a number of organisational risks identified:

- A lack of availability of Fire Safety Inspectors for out-of-hours enforcement.
- High staff turnover due to the availability of higher-paid roles in the private sector.
- Limited internal capacity for fire investigation to support Thames Valley collaboration.
- HMICFRS also identified the need for improved prioritisation of enforcement activity.

To address these challenges, we undertook a comprehensive review to create a new operating model and a dedicated management layer to provide focused leadership and governance. Once proposals had been developed, a meaningful consultation was held with the Protection Team to shape the final structure in a way that they could support and deliver.

The restructure integrates the important work of the Legal and Enforcement Hub into the wider Protection team, embeds fire investigation responsibilities into six posts to meet Thames Valley collaboration commitments, and introduces out-of-hours provision for fire safety enforcement and fire investigation to improve the resilience and efficiency of these services.

The development and retention of our Protection staff is important to us, so to promote career development and retention, the restructure created a Business Fire Safety Team incorporating Grey Book roles. It also establishes a clear progression pathway and salary enhancements for out-of-hours activities to improve retention, while including the option to utilise specialist support, such as fire engineering and legal services, from outside the Service.

With the introduction of this new structure, we expect to realise a number of benefits in the future:

- Enhanced delivery of services for the public through a Business Safety function, improved provision of service delivery through fire investigation, an out-of-hours function for Protection, and greater ability to effectively manage our regulatory responsibilities (for example, enforcement activity).
- While delivering a more effective structure for our protection work, it has generated savings to ensure that we are providing an efficient service for the Berkshire taxpayer. Through effective vacancy management, no redundancies were made as part of those savings.

- Improved career pathways for both Green and Grey Book staff. Clearer pathways and financial incentives will support staff retention and development, reducing the impact of staff turnover. As well as a new Station Manager in Protection, four opportunities have been added for Grey Book staff to work part-time in Protection and gain fire safety qualifications.
- To support future innovation and improvement, we have a Change and Improvement function in the structure that will allow us to support better ways of working for all staff across the Service – for example by sharing risk information and through key future projects

Overall, the restructure of Protection is expected to improve service delivery, resilience, efficiency and career development.

## » Risk Management

### Improving our Operational Resilience and Appliance Availability

To maintain our availability to respond to incidents, in our CRMP, we made a commitment to maintaining a minimum of 14 frontline fire appliances.

Priority three is about ensuring we are providing the most effective response to emergency incidents and making sure we are a resilient and reliable service for our communities.

A project team was tasked with improving our operational resilience and appliance availability. Data we collected shows that annual leave distribution, combined with other extractions (sickness, training, light duties, vacancies), are driving crewing volatility, and overreliance on voluntary overtime are causing difficulties in maintaining crewing levels.

Alongside wider work on recruiting enough staff, improving coordination of crewing through our Operational Support and Improvement Team (OSIT), and providing sufficient training, we consulted on changes to the Grey Book Annual Leave Policy to help us support a more sustainable crewing model, while maintaining flexibility for staff.

Following a consultation on an alternative model for the Grey Book Annual Leave Policy for whole-time station-based staff, changes have been made that will increase flexibility and improve the policy for staff, while still contributing towards improving availability.

### Reviewing the Incidents that Do Not Form Part of our Core Statutory Responsibilities

To ensure that we manage our resources effectively, our CRMP commits us to review the incidents that do not form part of our core statutory responsibilities, to better understand the implications for the Service in attending these incidents.

We have completed work to understand the impact and costs of responding to incidents, and identified risks through our detailed risk analysis, which do not currently form part of our core statutory responsibilities.

This will support our other priorities, particularly those focused on public value and efficiency.

In gathering this information, we have more evidence to support our work with the sector to lobby Government for clarity and recognition of the role of Fire and Rescue Services in public safety and the appropriate funding required to resource incidents that currently do not form part of our core statutory responsibilities.

Following an extensive review, a report was produced that was approved by the Fire Authority which recommended that we take the following actions:

1. Consider whether there is any benefit to reducing attendance levels to incident types such as locked in/out, lift rescue or release.
2. Use the findings of this report to inform the development of CRMP Priority 3, to support the development of a revised response model.

3. Monitor the exercise of statutory powers to ensure that their use does not adversely impact the delivery statutory duties.

Many of the incidents we attend are valued by the communities we serve and the partner agencies we work alongside. In addition, RBFRS staff think that there is a justified moral and public expectation to continue attending, while residents have stated during our CRMP they would like us to maintain animal rescue capabilities.

The option to reduce our attendance at other incidents would require a significant expenditure of organisational resource to achieve a meaningful outcome.

The burden and impact on response of the exercise of statutory powers should be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that the focus on core duties as expressed in the National Framework is maintained.

## » Risk Management

### Maintaining Frontline Fire Appliances, and Utilising Wholetime and On-call Staff as Effectively as Possible

The way our Response Model works has been evaluated in great detail, to ensure our fire appliances, specialist vehicles and staff are best placed to respond to incidents.

We recognise that we are entrusted with public money and have a duty to spend it wisely.

Therefore, we are committed to matching our resources to the risks within the county ensuring our fire appliances, specialist vehicles and staff, are best placed to respond to incidents.

The Fire Authority has committed us to maintain 19 frontline fire appliances, and a baseline service provision of 14 frontline fire appliances, utilising wholetime and on-call staff as effectively as possible, through local management.

As a Service, we measure our baseline performance on our response through what we call the Response Standard.

We measure the amount of time it takes for the first fire appliance to arrive at an incident within 10 minutes, and we aim to meet this standard on 75 percent of occasions. During 2025-26, we met this standard on 71.5 percent of occasions.

Although we did not meet the target this year, the Service and Fire Authority remains committed to achieving the Response Standard. The implementation of Priority Six has contributed to protecting and improving our response by ensuring that our fire engines remain available, and we hope

### Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service was the only fire and rescue service in England to improve its attendance times at primary fires over a ten-year period.

to see an increase in our performance in the future.

It will ensure that we are not over-reliant on the voluntary use of pre-arranged overtime (PAOT) – offering a more sustainable model, which safeguards the welfare of staff.

Additionally, the anticipated savings from Priority Six through a reduction in overtime were immediately reinvested by the Fire Authority to support the continued funding of 10 additional firefighting posts, helping to boost crewing numbers so that more fire engines are available at all times of day.

The change also recognises the value and importance of our on-call colleagues by enabling the 14th fire engine to be crewed by on-call firefighters at night time only (where availability is higher and incident rates are lower), recognising the value on-call firefighters offer to the Service's response model.

The Response Standard is an ambitious and stretching measure agreed by the Fire Authority and reports from the time the emergency call is received

to the time of arrival on scene.

For further context, it should be noted that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service was the only fire and rescue service in England to improve its attendance times at primary fires over a ten-year period, improving our average speed of response by 22 seconds, as reported in 2022-23.

We will continue to closely monitor and manage our performance against the Response Standard, together with longer-term trends in our incident profile and demand.

In addition to the work we are doing on on call handling, we will continuously review the management of our resources via our internal Response Resourcing Group, to ensure we are optimising our ability to respond as quickly as possible and explore opportunities in the longer-term that would support this objective.

# » Risk Management

## Contaminants Management

In 2025-26, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service continued its work in managing and reducing the risk of harm caused by contaminants to maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff within the Service, as well as the public and visitors of our fire stations across the county.

### The Firehouse

This year, to prioritise the health and wellbeing of the community, we began publishing on our website the dates of the planned burns at the Firehouse at our Learning and Development Centre. Through publically sharing this schedule, local residents are now more informed and can take any precautions to support their health and wellbeing – such as keeping doors and windows closed until the burn subsides.

### Facilities Level Gap Analysis

The Contaminants Working Group created a spreadsheet that records and analyses the optimisation of the facilities across each station.

This makes it clearer and easier for the Facilities Team to track improvements and implement any changes that help to advance our Service's contaminants management.

This work is being completed in collaboration with health and safety representatives from the Fire Brigades Union, promoting a unified approach to contaminants management and thereby maintaining the health and wellbeing of our staff through continued upgrades to our operational sites.

## Sentinel Air Purifiers

Sentinel air purifiers have been installed in the new Learning and Development Centre, and in the three new appliances that were acquired in 2025.

The Sentinel air purifiers are neutralisation devices. They decrease the contaminants in the air by releasing ions that bind the contaminant particles, and cause them to become dormant and heavier. This allows the particles to fall to the ground, where they get removed during regular cleaning routines.

### Features of the Three New Appliances

In July, the Service acquired three new appliances. They were deployed in West Berkshire – two at Newbury and one at Theale fire stations.

The new Volvo fire engines are part of a programme to update our fleet with modern vehicles that incorporate the latest technology and promote the health and wellbeing of our firefighters.

In addition to the Sentinel air purifiers mentioned above, which will be installed as standard in all new appliances, the stowage of breathing apparatus (BA) equipment is now outside of the crew cab. This contributes to a cleaner and safer cab environment by separating the used BA sets from the crew, and containing the contaminants that linger on the sets to the compartment.

Councillor Jeff Brooks, Chair of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority said: "These modern vehicles are part of the aligned Thames Valley series and boast a range of innovative features to enhance firefighter safety and wellbeing – which is of paramount importance to us.

"The Fire Authority has prioritised investing in frontline fire appliances, recognising the importance of providing fit-for-purpose equipment to support the services provided by a modern fire and rescue service."

### Air Quality Monitors

The Contaminants Working Group began monitoring the air quality at Whitley Wood and Bracknell fire stations to assess the risk of contaminants and overall air quality within key areas of our buildings – appliance bay gyms, office spaces, BA rooms and watch rooms.

The two fire stations were chosen for this initial testing to give us a baseline for the air quality monitoring process and to determine if the Firehouse has a significant impact on the air quality.

Since the installation, the results so far are positive and are well within both legal and advised levels. This affirms that our continued progress in contaminants management is successful in maintaining the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff.

## » Risk Management

### Prevention

Throughout the year, our crews and Prevention teams have worked hard to provide safety education across Berkshire. Here are just some of the ways that the Service achieved its Prevention objectives in 2025-26.

#### Raising Awareness of Our Services

This year, the Service conducted 5,898 Safe and Well Visits across the county. This free service is delivered by our Prevention Team and operational crews.

To encourage uptake in Safe and Well Visits, our Prevention Team promote the service regularly at community events across the county. Examples of these engagement opportunities include:

In August 2025, our West Hub Prevention and Protection teams attended a multi-agency event at Reading's Victoria Recreation Park.

The event brought together multiple emergency services to engage with the public and promote important safety messaging.

Meanwhile, in February 2026, two of our Safe and Well Technicians, travelled to the Wycliffe Baptist Church to deliver a home fire safety presentation to the Gurkha Ladies Community.

They were joined by Ashok Rai, Estates Manager, who acted as a translator, helping to deliver a bilingual fire safety session in both English and Nepali.

This year, we saw a small increase in 'fires in the home' (2.1 percent), of which the cause of fire for

95 percent of such incidents was accidental. This shows how inclusive fire safety sessions like this one are necessary to educating people about fire risks in the home and how to prevent them.

### Fire Safety

In 2025-26 the Service responded to 1,086 outdoor fires. Therefore, our Prevention Team focused on raising awareness for outdoor fire safety.

At locations at higher risk of wildfire, crews placed information boards and signs. Additionally, we supported the Berkshire Wildfire Collaboration Group – set up by West Berkshire Council – to plan and coordinate wildfire prevention strategies.

One group at risk from fires in the open are the homeless and our Prevention teams conducted outreach work with rough sleepers to help keep them safe.

We published a new leaflet aimed at people living in tents and temporary shelters. Prevention gave additional training to staff who work with these community groups to help them deliver the messaging effectively.

Ahead of Halloween and Bonfire Night, our Prevention teams and crews worked hard to promote safety messaging associated with these celebrations.

A particular highlight was when Bracknell White Watch engaged with a national firework supplier to promote fire safety, arranging for the supplier's local shop in Bracknell to distribute safety leaflets with each purchase made.



## » Risk Management

### Water Safety

Water safety is a key risk area for the Service and we performed 48 water rescues in 2025-26 – a reduction from 59 last year. Raising awareness for water safety remains a high priority for our Prevention Team.

In June, following a request from Reading Borough Council and the organisers of Reading Festival, firefighters from Caversham Road and Wokingham Road fire stations created an instructional video on how to use new throw lines located along the Thames.

On Saturday, 19 July, Slough's Red Watch firefighters delivered a water safety demonstration and community talk at Project Sponge's Water and Nature Festival, working in close partnership with Slough Borough Council.

Later in August, Prevention staff, volunteers and Caversham Road's Green Watch attended a multi-agency safety event at Wokingham Waterside Centre, which brought together several of our partners to help educate the public on water safety.

### Road Safety

In May, the Service supported Project EDWARD's (Every Day Without A Road Death) cross-county ride to raise awareness for equestrian safety.

Project EDWARD is an award-winning road safety initiative that promotes evidence-led strategies to reduce road fatalities through the 'safe system' approach, where the long-term objective is a road traffic system free from death and serious injury.

As part of the campaign, the Service lent our support to the campaign on three separate occasions across the week; starting at the launch in Lambourn, midweek at the community engagement event in Yattendon promoting road safety, and to celebrate the end of the ride at Windsor Castle.

### Carbon Monoxide Safety

In 2025-26, our Prevention teams launched a carbon monoxide project. This project was a joint initiative with SGN, whereby they provided RBFRS with free carbon monoxide alarms to use and install during Safe and Well Visits.

### Supporting Those Most At-Risk

We work closely with partner agencies to ensure individuals with risk factors are referred to us, enabling us to support the most vulnerable in our communities. This year we exceeded the target for the number of referrals from our partners counting 5,534, an increase of 10.6 percent.

We delivered 5,898 visits through the year, an increase of eight percent from the previous year. This is an average of 492 Safe and Well Visits per month. These visits aim to reduce the risk to our communities and provide education, support and assurance to the most vulnerable residents in their homes.

We recognised a theme in deliberate fire setting with vehicle fires. Joint fire investigation activity and working with Thames Valley Police supported successful court outcomes. Targeted work noted smoking materials and deliberate fire setting behaviour as key contributing factors.



## » Risk Management

### Property Manager Fined for Safety Breach

**A** Wokingham property manager was ordered to pay more than £26,000 for fire safety breaches following a successful prosecution brought by Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.

Mr Artan Hyseni was issued the fine after pleading guilty to three charges under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 at Reading Magistrates' Court.

Our investigation found that there were three serious fire safety deficiencies at a property owned by Mr Hyseni in Wokingham. The breaches included a lack of fire detection and firefighting equipment at the property, the lack of a Fire Risk Assessment, and inadequate means of escape in an emergency.

Mr Hyseni was ordered to pay £6,666 for each of the three offences for which he was convicted. Combined with the victim surcharge and Fire Authority's prosecution fees, the total fine that Mr Hyseni was issued amounted to £26,441.35.

Rachel Bloomfield, Prevention and Protection Change and Improvement Manager at the Service, said: "This successful prosecution demonstrates to businesses that we will act where necessary to protect the public, should they not take their commitments to fire safety seriously.

"We will always try to work with businesses to help keep them, their customers and our community safe. However, cases like Mr Hyseni's show that we will take decisive action to ensure that the law is upheld if people's safety is at stake."

### Sharing Fire Safety Learning

**I**n April, our Protection Teams from across the county met at the Wokefield Park Hotel near Mortimer for a conference on Fire Safety in Berkshire.

The conference, which took place on Wednesday, 23 April, combined case study reviews, presentations from subject matter experts, and information sharing on some of the issues faced by our Fire Safety Teams across the county.

Talks focused on subjects such as fire safety in high-rise residential buildings, hospitals and other high-risk buildings covered by our Protection staff.

One of our Fire Safety Inspectors also gave a presentation on his two decades of experience working as a Magistrate alongside his career in the fire and rescue sector.

The event was rounded off by a presentation by Wayne Bowcock, then Chief Fire Officer, who gave certificates to five of our Fire Safety Inspectors for completing their Level Three diplomas in Fire Safety.

Speaking on the event, Gareth Murphy, West Hub Protection Manager said: "It was great to get everyone together to share some ideas and celebrate some of the hard work that has been going on across Protection.

"There are a lot of positives to take away from today and I'm looking forward to running similar events in the future."



**"This successful prosecution demonstrates to businesses that we will act where necessary to protect the public."**

## » Risk Management

### Keeping Buildings and Businesses Safe

Our Fire Safety Inspectors and Advisers completed 766 Full Fire Safety Audits in premises falling under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which outlines our duty to enforce fire safety in non-domestic premises. The total number of audits exceeded last year's performance due to increased competency as a result of officers completing qualifications.

Interim measures – the temporary actions taken to protect building occupants and manage fire risks – and ensuring visits to our sites which pose operational risks to our firefighters, were particularly pertinent given high-profile fire incidents nationally in 2026.

### New Operational Risk Information Digital Processes

**A**s outlined in our CRMP, we use evidence and professional judgement to analyse and reduce risk in our communities. In 2025-26, we have taken steps to enhance how we manage and use risk information to support better operational and strategic decision making.

One of the ways we have sought to achieve this is through the use of new technology to strengthen our management of risk information.

Reliable risk information is essential in ensuring that our crews are fully prepared for specific hazards when attending an incident, and that our Fire Safety Inspectors can access the latest fire safety when conducting audits.

Between December 2025 and January 2026, a trial was established to test whether a structured workflow using Microsoft 365 could improve the timeliness, visibility, assurance and governance of operational risk information across participating stations. Staff at Caversham Road, Wokingham Road, Bracknell and Ascot fire stations participated in the trial, submitting risk information in this way.

The evaluation assessed performance against defined measures of operational effectiveness, data quality, efficiency, usability, governance and scalability.

The results of the trial indicated an improved structure, greater resilience in the way that we manage risk information and staff confidence in the new system.

Training sessions were provided to staff and online resources were created, ahead of a planned full rollout across the Service in April 2026.

Whilst these new tools have strengthened our internal processes for the recording of risk information, we recognise that there are wider risks to manage and we do not manage community risk alone.

Therefore, future plans include the procurement of a new risk management system that will provide comprehensive oversight of Prevention, Protection, Response and Safeguarding data to drive more informed decision making on how we manage risk.

# » Sustainability

## Sustainability – Building a Service For The Future

The Service recognises the climate emergency and the social and economic issues it causes both globally and within our communities. This recognition led to the creation of the RBFRS Sustainability Strategy in 2024, which guides our mission to be more sustainable. Outlined below are some of our key areas of focus towards becoming more sustainable in 2025-26. However, sustainability is weaved into several other projects mentioned elsewhere in this Annual Report.

### Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Works at Five Locations

Over the last year, improvements to five of our fire stations were funded and made possible by our partnership with Salix Finance and the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS).

Upgrades to Caversham Road, Whitley Wood, Newbury, Wokingham Road and Langley fire stations were made possible by a significant investment by Royal Berkshire Fire Authority and a government grant through the PSDS.

The grant, which was successfully won by the Service earlier in 2025, has helped to fund a range of improvements at the five aforementioned fire stations, all aimed at reducing the environmental impact of our estate and making it more sustainable.

New heat pumps, LED lighting, window glazing, door replacements and insulation improvements are just some of the improvements made possible by this project. At Whitley Wood, a small solar panel array was even added to the roof of the fire station.

Molly Evanson, Programme Co-ordinator from Salix, said: “It’s incredible to see the progress made here at the stations and to meet the teams face-to-face who have been driving the project.

“At Salix, we spend a lot of time building strong

relationships and working alongside organisations as they work towards their net-zero goals. Seeing this level of ambition, and the tangible results on the ground, is genuinely inspiring.”

### Sustainability Roadmap

Following the signing of the Sustainability Development Policy in 2024, we have taken several steps towards achieving the objectives set out in the document.

Throughout 2025-26, we focused on improving energy and resource efficiency, with the LED lighting project and heat decarbonisation being a key focus.

An actionable roadmap was created in alignment with the Sustainability Development Policy that sets out the actions for 2025 and beyond with a focus on Our People, Guardianship, Consumption Reduction and Decarbonisation to reduce RBFRS’s overall environmental impact.

Key themes from this roadmap include:

- Sustainable procurement
- Review of waste management
- Sustainable learning and development
- Carbon reduction initiatives
- Responsible consumption

- Governance development
- Focus on collaboration and sharing

Notable outcomes from this year include ongoing support for the sustainability programme and support for the Sustainable Development Policy and roadmap.

From this, key areas of progress were selected and developed further in late 2025 and early 2026:

- Integration of governance and reporting for sustainability within the Service.
- Carbon emission templates and data review.
- Proposals for education and learning around sustainability.
- Sustainable procurement including review of waste procurements.

These initial actions will inform priority areas and targets for the next year

Looking ahead, we will build on this progress by refining our goals, strengthening governance, and continuing to integrate sustainability into everyday operations.

We aim to provide a foundation for continuous improvement and support informed decision-making in the 2026-27 financial year.

## » Culture

### Culture – Creating an Environment Where People Can Thrive

**A**s a Service, we are focused on creating a safe, inclusive and respectful working environment where our people feel valued and supported. To achieve this, we have focused on improving our working environment and estate while supporting workforce wellbeing and safety.

Ultimately, our overarching aim is to firmly embed dignity, respect and inclusion across the organisation and the communities we serve.

#### Culture Plan

**O**ur organisation is made up of a group of people who care deeply about making a positive difference within their community.

Delivering our plans depends on how we work together, as well as what we do.

In its latest assessment, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) graded RBFRS as 'Good' at promoting values and culture.

While we recognise there are so many positives about our culture and how we work together, we have continued to focus on improving the processes, systems and environments we experience every day to ensure that RBFRS remains a safe, supportive and inclusive Service.

To formalise our approach, our Culture Plan was published at the end of the last financial year (2024-25). During the last year, we have made significant efforts to ensure that this is embedded and used across teams to support conversations during everyday activity across the Service.

Overall, our Culture Plan aims to support the organisation to continue to be one that we all feel proud to belong to.

We see our true culture coming out on our good days, so following the publication of this plan, teams across the Service have been encouraged to talk about what makes a good day for them and how we can increase the number of good days we have, to deliver even better services to the public.

This is also one of the ways that we are tackling the issue of staff retention.

We know that it is a significant investment of our staff time and resources to attract and train new staff, so we aim to retain more staff by creating a safe, supportive and inclusive environment that helps staff feel valued and committed to our organisation.

## » Culture

### Developing our People

**A** key area of focus for us is how we develop our staff to ensure that they can achieve their potential.

While there are a range of opportunities to support career development, we are working hard to improve this for all.

We have reviewed all courses delivered internally, as well as courses delivered as part of Development and Assessment Pathways (DAPs). This includes Leadership and Management Development and Assessment Pathways at foundation, supervisory and middle manager levels, which will be made available to everyone.

We have introduced 'My Path', a tool which is designed to support talent management and succession planning.

My Path will help us to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders. It is designed to help staff explore their readiness and prepare to take the next step. Staff can refer themselves (with manager support) or be nominated by another manager.

This will help the organisation with improved visibility of emerging and high potential talent to support succession planning to critical and specialist roles ensuring we have the capability, skills and expertise needed for the future.

Once identified, aspiring and current leaders will be able to take part in our Leadership Essentials course, which is aimed at helping those into their first leadership role or existing leaders who would like a refresh of their skills. A Leadership Impact course will also be available, which is designed for current managers to explore the impact they have on those around them.

In further support of this, the bursary scheme continues to be available for staff to apply to. The bursary scheme enables staff to gain an additional qualification or training to enhance their knowledge, skill set and personal development in differing areas to the support they receive in their roles.

It also contributes to increasing the capability, capacity and resilience of our workforce; further improving the service we provide to the communities of Berkshire.

## » Culture

### Dignified Workspaces

**T**he Service has introduced and updated a set of standards for our workplaces. The dignified workplace standards establish the minimum requirements that all our facilities must meet to ensure they support a safe, supportive and inclusive environment.

While these standards are the baseline, the Service is committed to striving toward the higher, desirable standard wherever possible and practical.

Following the introduction of these standards, the Service conducted a thorough audit of our entire estate to identify improvements required to meet the minimum standard.

The audit, which took place in 2025, was conducted by our Estates and Human Resources teams. It recognised that each of our locations present unique challenges that needed to be overcome to achieve compliance.

In line with the Equality Act 2010, some facilities across our estate, including some dormitories and multiple occupancy bathrooms, were redesignated as single sex spaces.

In many cases, the improvements were achieved by implementing minor changes identified in the audit, such as adding signage or improving locks.

However, the audit identified locations that required more extensive changes. While interim measures are in place to ensure they meet the minimum standard, plans are in for permanent improvements at each of these locations.

These plans are closely linked with the Service's Strategic Asset Investment Framework.

As an example of our aspirational standard for our estate, our new Learning and Development Centre was designed and built with single occupancy gender neutral showers and bathrooms. Plans for upcoming station refurbishment projects will also aim to achieve this standard moving forwards.

The Service also recognises the recent Supreme Court ruling which provides clarification on how sex is interpreted under the Equality Act 2010.

This ruling has implications for how organisations like ours manage the use of single-sex facilities in the workplace and how we support all colleagues. The audit considered this ruling and included recommendations to ensure ongoing compliance with legislation.

We acknowledge the Supreme Court ruling may have a personal impact on some individuals. We encourage staff to continue checking in with one another and to offer support where needed, helping to maintain a positive and respectful working environment.

Our core values remain unchanged. Everyone – regardless of sex, gender identity, or background – deserves to feel safe, supported and respected at work.

This work forms part of our wider commitment to fostering a workplace that is safe, supportive and inclusive for all.

### Fire Cadets Programme

**F**ire Cadets is a youth initiative programme operated by firefighters, staff and volunteers with support from the Service's Safety Education Team, and takes place at four fire stations across the county – Crowthorne, Maidenhead, Newbury, and Whitley Wood. In 2025-26, 35 young people between the ages of 13 and 17 took part in our Fire Cadets Programme.

It is a national initiative that encourages young people to experience what being a firefighter involves, while also learning essential life skills such as teamwork self-discipline, confidence and leadership. In addition to operational skills, Cadets also have the opportunity to learn about all aspects of the Service, including Prevention and Protection.

The Fire Cadets course takes place over the academic year with a challenging programme of activities, such as firefighter drills, breathing apparatus procedures and fire safety awareness sessions – before culminating in a Graduation.

**In 2025-26, 35 young people between the ages of 13 and 17 took part in our Fire Cadets Programme.**

## » Culture

### The Fire Fighters Charity

This year has been another successful year for fundraising for the Fire Fighters Charity. Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, the Service held many community events that collected donations for the cause.

Throughout the year, several charity car washes were held across the county. These fun-filled fundraising events were held at our Slough, Bracknell, Wokingham Road, Crowthorne, Mortimer, Maidenhead, Newbury, and Wokingham fire stations. Between them all, an impressive donation total of over £18,000 was collected.

In May, firefighters Martyn Ainsworth and Shaun Foley, based at Newbury Fire Station and Wokingham Road Fire Station respectively, completed the 'Station 2 Station' ultramarathon. The 58-mile run took the pair across the county where they visited every single fire station in Berkshire. During this giant fundraiser, they raised over £3,400.

At the start of 2026, the Fire Cadet units competed to see how much clothing they could recycle in the annual 'Bag It and Bank It' campaign. Crowthorne totalled 830kg, Whitley Wood gathered 161kg, Maidenhead collected 126kg, and Newbury obtained 100kg. Congratulations to the Fire Cadets for bagging over 1,200kg of clothes for the Charity.

While these are just a few of the fundraising events mentioned above, the Service raised an extraordinary donation total of £111,222 for The Fire Fighters Charity.

### Newbury's Open Day

On 27 October, Blue Watch firefighters hosted a Halloween-themed open day at Newbury Fire Station.

The day started with an hour-long session for people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), where the guests were able to look around the fire station and take part in all of the activities, while there were fewer people and the music was played at a lower volume.

Allowing children with SEND to participate in a dedicated quieter session proved to be popular, with many parents, guardians and carers commenting on how nice it was for the fire station to provide an accessible option for children who may find louder, more crowded events overwhelming.

After this hour, lots more families came along to the fire station to meet the crew and take part in the activities. Some of the activities on offer were having a go at using a hose reel, looking around the fire engines, an arts and crafts station, face painting, and a 'House of Horrors' – the chamber decked out with decorations.

Community First Responders from South Central Ambulance Service also set up an area inside the station's appliance bay teaching people ABCs to check for a casualty's safety (Airways, Breathing and Circulation) and how to do CPR.

Guests also got to watch two demonstrations from the firefighters – a tower ladder rescue scenario and a road traffic collision scenario with help from the Heavy Rescue Unit.



## » Culture

### Supporting the Armed Forces

In 2018, the Service signed the Armed Forces Covenant, which aims to acknowledge and recognise the commitment of organisations across the country who support members of the Armed Forces. We were then accredited with the Gold Award in the Employer Recognition Scheme in 2020.

Five years later, in December 2025, the Service's Gold Award has been renewed for sustaining exceptional support to veterans and the Armed Forces community. This accreditation will be in place for a further five years.

Continuing its support for the Armed Forces community, the Service held two Armed Forces Veterans' Hubs in 2025-26.

The first of which was at Whitley Wood Fire Station in September. As well speaking to the representatives from the charities who offered their services, guests also got the chance to talk to Cllr. Tricia Brown and Deputy Mayor of Reading Cllr. Paul Gittings.

The second was held at Newbury Fire Station on Monday, 3 November, ahead of Remembrance Day. This particular Hub was the best attended of the year, with guests and stall holders alike expressing their appreciation for the event.

To make this Hub extra special, we were joined by a group of Chelsea Pensioners from the Royal Hospital Chelsea. The Mayor and Mayoress of Newbury, the Mayor of Thatcham, Cllr. Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Cllr. Owen Jeffery and Lee Dillon

MP for Newbury also attended and showed their support.

Following the growth and success of the Armed Forces Veterans' Hubs, three more have been planned for 2026 with an aim to engage with residents across Berkshire who are part of the Armed Forces community.

### Summer Internship Scheme

In August, the Service welcomed four young people from across the county as part of the Summer Internship Scheme. The Summer Internship Scheme encourages those who may not have considered a career in the fire and rescue sector to explore some of the many roles available to them.

This year, the scheme was open to people from Berkshire who were aged 18 and from ethnic groups that are currently under-represented in the Service. During the five-week programme, interns worked as part of several teams and took part in activities aimed at increasing their awareness of the work done by the Service.

They also visited five different fire stations over the course of their placements, where firefighters and fire safety inspectors taught them more about their roles. As part of these station visits, the interns took part in firefighting drills, worked with firefighters and joined our inspectors on fire safety audits.

Speaking on the internship, one of the interns said: "Before my internship, I mainly thought of the Fire and Rescue Service as firefighters responding to emergencies. I didn't realise just how much work

goes on behind the scenes – from communications to community engagement to EDI – all of which play a role in keeping people safe."

Another intern said: "I feel like I made a difference in the Service, helped out and tried my best to be an efficient and good worker."



## » Culture

### Celebrating our Service - Award Ceremony

A range of outstanding achievements were recognised at our Awards Ceremony, which was held on Friday, 21 November.

This event, which took place at Select Car Leasing Stadium in Reading, provided an opportunity to recognise the exceptional work of staff, volunteers and partners during the past year.

With 28 staff members eligible for Long Service Awards and Long Service and Good Conduct Medals this year, and a total of 13 separate award categories to present, there was plenty to celebrate.

Staff who have served 20 years' or 30 years' service received their Long Service Award or Long Service and Good Conduct Medal from the Lord Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire, Mr Andrew Try, before a number of awards were presented.

This year's event was sponsored by Multitone, Lighthouse Events, Serve and Protect Credit Union, Softcat and Fire Solutions by ODS – their support helped us to make this a fitting event for staff, volunteers and partners.

Councillor Jeff Brooks, Chair of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, who presented awards at the event said: "I'm delighted that we were able to recognise so many fantastic public servants.

"While many good deeds across our communities go unseen, the event was about shining a spotlight on some of those who help Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service do its vital work in keeping people safe.

"This includes frontline staff delivering services to the public, members of support departments, volunteers, colleagues from partner organisations and members of the public.

"I am immensely proud of all our staff as we continue to keep people safe and protected across Berkshire."

Scan the QR code below to watch our highlights video from the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Awards Ceremony 2025, or watch via our [YouTube channel](#).



"I am immensely proud of all our staff as we continue to keep people safe and protected across Berkshire."

## » Capability

### Capability – Providing for Our People

**C**apability is a key principle outlined in our CRMP. This means valuing and investing in developing our people, because they are our most important asset in achieving our goals and delivering our purpose.

### Staying Prepared for Incidents

**T**hroughout 2025-26, we undertook several major training exercises, often involving partner agencies, to prepare our crews for the different types of incidents that we may be called to. Our exercises reflect the changing risk profile of Berkshire, and we work hard to ensure that we are ready to deal with both current and emerging risks across the county. Here are some of the highlights:

#### Marauding Terror Attack Simulation

Set in an old Franciscan mission in the village of Cold Ash, White Watch crews from Newbury and Theale were called to respond to a simulated terror attack on Thursday, 26 June. Working alongside firearms units from Thames Valley Police (TVP) and paramedics from South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS), crews extinguished a basement fire and rescued ‘casualties’ whilst police apprehended several armed culprits.

Back at Service Headquarters, Thames Valley Fire Control Service were also involved in the exercise, working closely with crews on the scene to relay information from TVP and SCAS.

#### Caleo Three at Reading University

White Watch crews from across the county took part in Caleo Three, our third multi-agency, high-rise

exercise at the University of Reading on Monday, 8 September. Crews from Newbury, Theale, Hungerford and Mortimer fire stations worked with partners from Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hampshire & Isle of Wight fire and rescue services during the exercise.

They were joined at the scene by SCAS, Ambulanz, TVP, and Berkshire Lowland Search and Rescue; the latter two of which brought drones to support crews in the tower.

Inside the tower, volunteers from the Service and members of the Casualties Union were waiting to be rescued by crews. Meanwhile, Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) provided fire survival guidance to ‘casualties’ in the building.

The exercise built on learning from previous incidents and training exercises, including the Grenfell Inquiry, the Mosaic Apartments Incident debrief, Exercise Hightower and Exercise Caleo One and Two.

#### Testing Capabilities in Swinley Forest

In October, we held a three-day National Resilience training exercise which involved partners across the region descending on Swinley Forest.

The exercise tested a national response to support a large-scale wildfire. The first day was scheduled to



be a Hub training exercise on wildfire procedures before escalating over the following 48 hours.

The exercise simulated a wildfire set in a woodland of approximately three hectares with multiple seats of fire. Fires were located using the support of the TVP Drone Team.

TVFCS requested support from nine national resilience capabilities. There were also tactical advisors from four other Services supported by six of our Officers and our support vehicles from Hungerford, Crowthorne, Maidenhead and Bracknell fire stations.

## » Capability

### Redevelopment of our Learning and Development Centre

**2**025 marked a major landmark for the Service with the opening of our new Learning and Development Centre in Whitley Wood, Reading.

The building, which was officially opened on Friday, 25 July, by Mr Andrew Try, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire, will help train current and future generations of firefighters in Berkshire.

Also joined by the Mayor of Reading, Councillor Alice Mpfu-Coles, Yuan Yang MP and councillors from across the county, the Service marked the opening with a small celebration in the new training facility.

The new Learning and Development Centre includes several important features designed to better facilitate the training of Berkshire's firefighters. Central to the building is safety, and the building has been designed specifically to mitigate contaminants exposure after training in the Firehouse.

The building was designed and built specifically to reduce the spread of contaminants from the firehouse into the building. Firefighters training at the facility, as well as our instructors, have dedicated 'dirty' changing and showering facilities that allow them to properly decontaminate before entering the 'clean' classrooms and office spaces.

Upstairs, the new building features classrooms and breakout spaces that allow our Learning and Development Team to run several training

courses at one time, including in the initial training programmes for our newest cohorts of Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices.

Other specialist training capabilities offered by the new Training Centre include our driving school, incident command courses, breathing apparatus training and other courses to help our existing staff develop their skills.

Sustainability is another key focus for the Service, and the new facility is outfitted with solar PV panels, LED lighting, air source heat pumps and electric car charging facilities to help mitigate its impact on the environment.

"As a Service, we are delighted to have this new Learning and Development Centre," said Wayne Bowcock, then Chief Fire Officer of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

"Our staff are our most important asset, and this new facility will allow us to better support their development, giving them the skills they need to effectively serve the people of Berkshire."

The new Learning and Development Centre, designed by Premier Modular Limited, was installed in November 2024. As a modular building, the new facility was built offsite and installed in just four days to minimise disruption to the Service's training schedule.

Following the installation, contractors furnished and outfitted the building which was fully operational by April 2025 ahead of the Opening Ceremony that summer.



**"Our staff are our most important asset, and this new facility will allow us to better support their development."**

## » Capability

### Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices

**W**e formally welcomed 12 new Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices to the Service in 2025, with a further 12 Apprentices beginning their initial training in March 2026.

The latest cohort of Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices graduated at a ceremony held at Maidenhead Fire Station.

The graduates celebrated successfully completing their training alongside family and friends at the ceremony, and were presented with certificates by the then Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Mark Arkwell, and Vice-Chair of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, Councillor Paul Gittings.

Much like previous cohorts of Wholetime Firefighter recruits, anyone, from any background or walk of life could apply to be a Firefighter Apprentice, as long as they were new to the role.

During the training course, the Firefighter Apprentices were thoroughly tested with a range of practical and theoretical training, core skills, breathing apparatus, fire behaviour, water rescue and road traffic collision training.

Speaking on the graduation, Mark Arkwell, then Deputy Chief Fire Officer said: "I felt incredibly privileged to formally welcome our 12 newest Wholetime Firefighters into the Service.

"After months of hard work and dedication during their training course, the Graduation Ceremony was an excellent way to celebrate their achievements and mark the beginning of their journey with us in keeping the communities of Berkshire safe."

During their training, the firefighter recruits took part in an apprentice tradition. They organised a fundraising challenge to raise money for the Fire Fighters Charity.

On Saturday, 31 May, the cohort cycled the equivalent of the Three Peaks Challenge – approximately 485 miles – on static bikes at The Lexicon in Bracknell.

With their amazing effort and the generosity of supporters, they raised over £6,000 for the Fire Fighters Charity.

Whilst the graduation marked the end of their initial training, the new firefighters continued to develop as part of their apprenticeship programme on watches across the county.

In March 2026, 12 more Apprentices began their initial training with the Service. We also launched another Wholetime recruitment process in February of 2026, with a view to welcoming another cohort in the summer.

As part of this latest recruitment campaign, the Service reached more than 230,000 people via Facebook with our campaign. This was more than double the number reached by the previous two campaigns combined.

We found similar success on other platforms. Views on Instagram almost tripled from the last campaign, totalling at over 19,300.

In total, approximately 700 people applied as part of the latest cohort, the highest number of applicants received by the Service in several years.



## » Capability

### On-call Firefighter Recruitment

In 2025-26, our Service saw more success with the recruitment and training of On-call Firefighters.

#### New On-call Firefighters

On Friday, 5 December 2025, four applicants completed the initial acquisition course, marking their first step into their new roles as On-call Firefighters.

After a two-week training course, the four completed their final assessments before continuing their development alongside the rest of their crews at their home stations – Mortimer and Lambourn.

Speaking on the new recruits, Matt Riley, Station Manager for On-call, said: “It was great to welcome our four newest On-call recruits in December.

“We’ve been really impressed in how they’ve hit the ground running, and the skills they’ve picked up during their initial training course came together well during the end-of-course assessment.

“Hopefully, we’ll be able to welcome more recruits in the near future.

“We’ve made some good progress this year with On-call recruitment and hopefully we can keep it up next year.”

#### New On-call RTC Operators

At the end of 2025-26, in late March, the Service gained nine new On-call Road Traffic Collision Operators. The group of On-call Firefighters passed their Road Traffic Collision Initial Course after

completing the week-long training.

They are now on the run at our On-call fire stations – Crowthorne, Hungerford, Lambourn, Mortimer, and Maidenhead – where they will continue to develop their skills and resilience as On-call Firefighters, alongside their crews.

### Specialist Capability Framework

Our Service has initiated a trial Specialist Capability Framework (SCF) to help develop our operational capabilities.

Within this framework, a capability is not defined simply as a vehicle, piece of equipment, or team in isolation. Instead, it is a combination of people, training, equipment, information, infrastructure, logistics, and governance required to manage risks safely and effectively.

The SCF programme aims to procure, develop, or upgrade specialised assets that are needed for the Service to enhance operational capabilities, safety and response times.

The Service already possesses and deploys a range of effective specialist capabilities, including Water Rescue, Aerial Ladder Platforms, Hazardous Materials response, and wildfire mitigation. Assets are being considered for introduction including (but not limited to) those for water rescues, high-angle rescues, hazardous materials incidents, and command and control.



“We’ve made some good progress this year with On-call recruitment and hopefully we can keep it up.”

## » Capability

### The Staff Development System

The first phase of the Staff Development System (SDS) was completed in January 2026. This new system will bring together functionality that was found across multiple systems, into one place.

Once all systems are migrated, it will be the hub of all staff development. At the click of a few buttons, staff will have access to all this information on demand.

In addition to bringing together all the above functionality into one system, we're also integrating with other systems, increasing process automation.

As an example, job role data is being passed from Firewatch to SDS, enabling role specific eLearning to be automatically assigned, removing the need to manually allocate training to individuals.

This improves the efficiency of our Resourcing and Development Team, freeing them up to perform other important tasks.

The new system went live in January 2026 with the eLearning module becoming available. Staff were invited to a number of demonstration sessions to enable them to get used to the new software and customise it to their needs.

Feedback from staff so far has been very positive as we move into the next phase of development as part of the PDR cycle.

### Finance System Replacement

An effective and easy to use finance system is crucial for the organisation. It ensures that the Service can manage its finances effectively.

This project began in December 2024 when our previous supplier officially ended support for the software that we were using, prompting a search for a new system.

Following a procurement process, our Finance and Business Information Systems teams have since been working tirelessly with our new suppliers to deliver the new system, which will offer greater functionality and accessibility from any location.

The new system brings people, data, and systems together in one place, and provides the opportunity for us to analyse financial data in a single integrated solution available on any device, anywhere, at any time.

This will enable us to drill down into underlying details and understand the financial position of the Service in great detail.

The new Finance System went live at the end of the 2025-26 financial year.

# » Assurance

## HMICFRS Inspection

**H**is Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has completed their latest inspection of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS), assessing that overall, RBFRS is providing a good service to the public.

This inspection was HMICFRS’s third assessment of the Service’s effectiveness and efficiency, and how well it looks after its people. Of the 11 areas inspected, RBFRS received ‘Good’ grades for eight of them. The remaining three were graded as ‘Adequate’.

This result comes in an increasingly challenging inspection process, with the addition of the ‘Adequate’ grade which maps against the previous ‘Good’ grade.

The principal findings are as follows:

- The Service continues to provide an effective Prevention, Protection and Response for the public, by working well with other fire and rescue services and organisations such as the police, local authorities and health providers.
- The Service is working hard to transform its estate and technology, and ensure staff are being productive at work. This is supporting the Service to improve its ways of working and provide a more efficient service to the public.
- Staff are proud to work for the Service and the culture is positive. Concerns can be raised and will be dealt with appropriately. The Service looks after its people and this enables them to

put the community at the heart of what they do.

The Service has addressed many of its areas for improvement from the last inspection in 2022. This includes efforts to reduce the burden of unwanted fire signals following a public consultation and ensuring that it is monitoring the collection of risk information, making it quickly available to staff responding to incidents.

Responding to the report, Councillor Jeff Brooks, Chair of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, said: “This assessment provided by HMICFRS is clear. RBFRS is a fantastic Service, made up of dedicated staff offering exceptional services to our residents.

“As a Fire Authority, we have challenged ourselves to have plans which not only maintain the positive levels of service offered, but crucially invest in equipment, fire stations and training to equip RBFRS for the years ahead.”

We are proud of this positive assessment, but we will not stand still. We will continue to learn, improve and build on this strong position to deliver even better outcomes for our communities.

You can read the [full inspection report](#) on the HMICFRS website.

### Statement of Assurance

**E**ach year, we publish an Annual Statement of Assurance to show how we are performing as a Service.

While this is a national requirement for all fire and rescue services in England, it also helps our communities, partners and government understand

## HMICFRS Results

<b>Outstanding</b>		
<b>Good</b>	Understanding fire and risk	Preventing fire and risk
	Public safety through fire regulation	
	Responding to fires and emergencies	
	Future affordability	Right people, right skills
	Promoting fairness and diversity	
	Promoting values and culture	
<b>Adequate</b>	Responding to major incidents	Best use of resources
	Managing performance and developing leaders	
<b>Requires Improvement</b>		
<b>Inadequate</b>		

how well we are managing our finances, making decisions, and delivering our services.

The statement explains how we are meeting the standards set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, and where we may need to improve.

You can read the [full statement on our website](#).

## » Our Year in Numbers



**1,971**

Primary and secondary fires attended.



**7,760**

Emergency incidents responded to.



**71.5%**

Incident response times within 10 minutes.



**5,898**

Safe and Well Visits completed.



**2,129**

Other services provided by RBFRS.



**766**

Fire Safety Audits carried out.

# » Corporate Measures

## Service Provision

Service Provision monitors the service we provide to the public. Performance is monitored in relation to attendance at incidents, types of incidents, Prevention activities and fire safety in commercial buildings.

Measure	2025/2026 Target	2025/2026 Actual
Number of fire deaths	0	4
Number of non-fatal fire casualties	34 max	18
Number of deliberate primary fires	112 max	93
Number of deliberate secondary fires	207 max	173
<b>Prevention</b>		
Increase the number of Referrals for Safe and Well Visits received from our partners	5%	10.6%
Percentage of Safe and Well referrals, where there has been a threat or incidence of arson, completed within 48 hours	100%	82.8%
Percentage of Very High Safe and Well Referrals completed within 72 hours	45%	27.8%
Percentage of High Risk Safe and Well Referrals completed within 14 days	64%	43.3%
<b>Protection</b>		
Proportion of Fire Safety Audits conducted against premises identified as High or Very High-Risk in our Risk-Based Inspection Programme	Monitor	14.1%
Number of Fire Safety Audits completed	Measure of volume	766
Percentage success when cases go to court	80%	No cases
Number of informal actions taken as a result of Protection intervention	Measure of volume	143
Number of formal actions taken as a result of Protection intervention	Measure of volume	39
Percentage of statutory fire consultations completed within the required timeframes	95%	95%

## » Corporate Measures

Measure	2024/2025 Target	2024/2025 Actual
<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%	71.5%
Percentage of wholetime frontline pumping appliance availability	97.4%	96.8%
Percentage of hours where there is adequate crewing on on-call frontline pumping appliances (based on 24/7 crewing)	50%	31.0%
Percentage of time that 14 or more pumping appliances are available	100%	87.1%
<b>Resilience</b>		
Percentage of visits to Very High, High and Medium Operational Risk sites completed in timescale	100%	58.1%
Number of Service Delivery Hub exercises completed	12	12
Percentage of Automatic Fire Alarm calls where RBFRS did not attend	45%	54.9%
<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>		
Percentage of respondents experiencing a fire, fire safety audit, or a Safe and Well Visit, satisfied with the service received	95%	99.7%
Number of complaints received	Monitor	25
Number of compliments received	Monitor	54

# » Corporate Measures

## Corporate Health

The Corporate Health quadrant monitors the wellbeing of the organisation. Performance is monitored in relation to staffing levels, health and safety and finances within RBFRS, to ensure the organisation is being run safely, efficiently and is cost effective.

Measure	2025/2026 Target	2025/2026 Actual
<b>Human Resources and Learning &amp; Development</b>		
Percentage of working time lost to sickness across all staff groups	5%	5.5%
Percentage of eligible staff with Personal Development Reviews	100%	81%
Number of formal grievances	Monitor	16
<b>Health and Safety</b>		
Number of RIDDOR* accidents and diseases	4 (Max)	10
<b>Finance and Procurement</b>		
Percentage of spend subject to competition	85%	90.8%
Compliant spend as a percentage of overall spend	100%	100%
<b>Freedom of Information</b>		
Number of Information Commissioner assessments finding that the Service has breached Information Rights Legislation	0	9
Monitoring the annual completion of the mandatory Protecting Information Course	95%	71%
Reporting of data breaches and near misses to include those that are reported to the ICO	Monitor	0
Completing the Data Subject Requests (SARs) within the permitted timeframes	100%	100%
Having a complete set of published Retention Schedules and keeping them up-to-date and auditing that data is retained in line with retention schedules	100%	71%

\*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.

# ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

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