



County Durham and Darlington **Fire and Rescue Authority**

Statement of Assurance 2017/18

Foreword

This statement of assurance is provided and published to show how County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority, have met and will continue to meet our commitment to the communities of County Durham and Darlington to provide a first-class fire and rescue service.

Having the 'safest people and safest places' is at the heart of everything we do as a fire and rescue service and is the golden thread running through every service we provide whether that is responding to emergencies, undertaking community safety activity or working with businesses to make them safer.

For a prolonged period of time now we have experienced some of the most significant cuts to public spending ever known. Continuing to provide a first-class fire and rescue service to people living, working and visiting County Durham and Darlington has meant we have had to innovate and do things differently. The past year has seen us collaborating with our partners more, looking at ways we can enhance and widen the role of our staff, changing the way we recruit our people and developing a culture which supports our aim for excellence in everything we do.

We are extremely proud of our performance and the way all of our staff have adapted to ensure we can continue to put the public at the heart of everything that we do. We currently have the fifth lowest number of accidental dwelling fires per thousand households in the country despite having some of the most deprived areas in the country within our service area. The success of our collaborative approach to community safety especially through our safe and wellbeing visits is making a real difference to our communities. We will continue to analyse and develop our approach in this area, working with our partners on innovative solutions to further reduce accidental dwelling fires and the harm they cause.

Over the last year or so we have seen significant increases in arson and deliberate fires in certain parts of our service area. This greatly increases the demand on our and a number of our partners resources which have all suffered due to the pressures of the austerity agenda. Although the partnership approach to this issue so far has been excellent, we all recognise the problems are complex. We will continue to drive a partnership approach in these areas and ensure we evaluate all of the activity we undertake to solve this issue.

The shocking tragedy at Grenfell Tower in London last year has had and will continue to have a significant impact on the fire and rescue sector. Our approach to business fire safety is different to other fire and rescue service as our operational crews have been trained to support our specialist fire safety staff with this important area of work. We deliver more fire safety audits per thousand business properties than any other service in the country. This has led to a huge reduction in the number of fires occurring in businesses in our area and brought some significant economic benefits to the local community. We will continue to deliver high quality support to local businesses whilst ensuring that they comply with their legal requirements through enforcement action where necessary.

Over the last twelve months we have undertaken a significant piece of work looking at our emergency response provision to ensure that we continue to have the right resources in the right places at the right times. We will continue to evaluate how risk and demand for our services is changing to ensure our offering to the community remains

As Chair of County Durham & Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority and Chief Fire Officer of the Fire and Rescue Service, we are satisfied that business has been conducted in accordance with proper standards and law and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Additionally, we are satisfied that the Authority has done everything within its power to comply with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.



Cllr John Robinson
Fire Authority Chair



Stuart Errington
Chief Fire Officer

The communities we serve

Our community

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service is situated in the heart of the North East of England, bordered to the north by Northumberland and Tyne and Wear, Cumbria to the west, Cleveland to the south east and North Yorkshire to the south.

We protect a population of 627,789 who occupy 285,135 households and 18,628 business premises across an area that covers approximately 2,432 km²/939 miles².

The city of Durham and town of Darlington are the major centres in our service area, with both situated on the east coast main line and close to the A1(M).

Other significant towns are Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Chester-le-Street, Consett, Crook, Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, Seaham, Spennymoor and Stanley.

Our natural environment

The area is one of huge contrast and diversity with a rich history and heritage in coal and iron mining, farming and heavy railway industry.

From the North Pennines in the west to the Durham Heritage Coastline in the east it includes landscapes, habitats and features of local, national and international importance.

Durham City and the larger industrial and commercial towns are situated in the east of the region; in contrast, the west is predominantly rural consisting of open moorland and wooded river valleys and is sparsely populated; indeed 1420 km² of the county is agricultural land.

Our built environment

Over the last 25 years the traditional industries, such as coal mining and steel manufacturing have disappeared. These have been replaced by high-tech factories and modern business parks in towns such as Peterlee and Sedgefield. Further regeneration is taking place in other local areas such as Darlington, Spennymoor and Bishop Auckland.

Approximately 20% of housing in the County is in social sector ownership with the majority concentrated in South and East Durham. The current stock is predominantly made up of terraced and semi-detached houses, with the proportion of flats and detached houses in the County lower than the national average.

The area has some significant transport networks including accessibility by rail via the East-Coast mainline, by road via the A1 (M) and A19 and by air via Newcastle and Durham Tees Valley International Airports.

Durham has a world class University which has been a leading centre of scholarship for over 1000 years with the students and graduates making a significant contribution to the local area and its economy. There are also strong links to Teesside University with their recently opened Business School located in Darlington.

Our heritage

Tourism plays an integral part in the local economy. There are over 260 ancient monuments in the County including Durham Cathedral and Durham Castle that are classified as World Heritage sites. Other key attractions include Beamish Museum, the North Pennines (Area of outstanding natural beauty) and the Durham County Cricket Ground at Chester-le- Street attracting thousands of visitors each year.

In addition, within the service area there is a mixture of mining and farming heritage, as well as the remains of a Roman Fort at Binchester and heavy railway industry, particularly in the southeast of the area. The Darlington Railway Museum commemorates this important railway heritage. The arts are also a key attraction in the Darlington area with the opening of the newly refurbished Hippodrome Theatre and Arts Centre.

The risks we face

Social risk

County Durham has 36 LSOAs* (11.1%) ranked in the top 10% most deprived areas in England (*A Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) is a geographic area designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales). These 36 LSOAs cover an area representing 10.2% of the county's population with 42.2% of the county's population living in areas in the top 30% most deprived nationally.

Darlington has 10 LSOAs (15.4%) ranked in the top 10% most deprived areas in England. These 10 LSOAs cover an area representing 13.6% of the county's population with 37.1% of the county's population living in areas in the top 30% most deprived nationally.

Nationally, 10% of LSOAs are ranked in the top 10% most deprived areas in England. This equates to 10% of the population of County Durham and Darlington having poor health statistics and low life expectancies.

The proportion of the overall population aged 65 and over in County Durham will increase from one in five people (19.6%) in 2014 to one in four people (26.4%) by 2039. In Darlington, over 1 in 4 of the population is projected to be aged 65+ by 2034, an increase of 43%.

County Durham and Darlington has poor health statistics and low life expectancies. Many of the causes of ill health are greatly influenced by 'unhealthy' lifestyle behaviours, which are in turn greatly influenced by wider social, economic and environmental factors such as poverty, housing, education and transport.

Environmental risk

There are a number of specific risks within the area that could significantly impact on our communities. There are industrial sites which fall under the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) regulations in Newton Aycliffe and Peterlee; an ethylene pipeline entering the northern end of County Durham and passing southwest into Cleveland; National and Local Transmission natural gas pipelines crossing the County; Durham Tees Valley International Airport; the port of Seaham; major road routes (A1M, A19 and A66) as well as the East Coast Mainline railway.

Over the last few years County Durham and Darlington has experienced severe weather during the winter months leading to increased risk to vulnerable people in our communities and presenting a challenge in the way we deliver our critical services. The impact of climate change has also led to an increase in fluvial and flash flooding which, over the last couple of years, has impacted heavily on local communities. Around 4,500 people including 1000 domestic dwellings are at risk from river flooding across the County and borough of Darlington. The main high-risk areas are Bishop Auckland, Durham City, Darlington Town Centre, Stanhope and Lanchester with other areas at risk in the Tees Valley to the South of Darlington including Hurworth and Croft.

There is a potential risk of wildfires occurring during the dry periods, more so in the western rural areas of the region which will have a dramatic impact on the local economy, farming, tourism and the environment.

Economic risk

The recession has had a significant impact on the local economy with engineering and component manufacturing seeing by far the highest number of redundancies. The largest employment areas are the urban centre and edge of town business/industrial parks in Durham City, Darlington Borough, the south of Newton Aycliffe (mostly traditional manufacturing) and to the west of Peterlee (automotive manufacturing and call centre activity). The foremost locations for knowledge based employment are Durham City and Darlington Borough reflecting the presence of major hospitals, a university, various colleges and Durham County Council's Headquarters.

Newton Aycliffe was selected as the location for Hitachi Rail Europe Ltd's first train factory in Europe. The £82m investment to assemble the next generation of high speed trains has created over 730 jobs.

Darlington and Durham City comprise of large scale industrial, commercial and residential sites that present a diverse range of risks. These areas also have a large number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and several large housing estates.

Further ambitious development is highlighted in the County Durham Plan which will see housing and industrial development including expansion of Net Park at Sedgefield and a new major development in the Bowburn/ Tursdale area.

Risks beyond our borders

The Service responds to and attends incidents beyond its borders both regionally and nationally. We have a clear understanding of the cross-border risks that may occur where we need to deploy our resources in emergency situations or where the impact of an incident in another area could impact on our communities. We have specific arrangements in place with our neighbouring services to share resources and provide mutual support to each other. We endeavour to share information on operational policies and procedures to ensure that when mutual assistance is required it does so effectively.

The Government monitors risks that the UK could face through the National Risk Assessment process, led by the Cabinet Office, and through other relevant risk

assessment and horizon-scanning processes. These risks are outlined in the National Risk Register, which can be accessed via the following link: [National Risk Register](#)

We work with partners on the County Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forum (LRF), in addition to close joint working with the Cleveland and Northumbria LRF, to identify very high and high risks through the Community Risk Register (CRR) and ensure relevant emergency plans are in place. We play an active role in leading and supporting the work of the LRF ensuring that everything possible is being done to protect the community. [County Durham Community Risk Register](#)

The Service also plays a full part in the National Resilience Programme which makes resources available from across the entire country to deal with major emergencies, wherever they occur. The resources we maintain to support this programme include High Volume Pumps (HVP), 3 HVP ancillary modules reducing the need for mobilisation of additional HVPs to any large incident in the region, Mass Decontamination Equipment and hazardous materials specialists who are trained to detect, identify and monitor chemicals at major incidents.

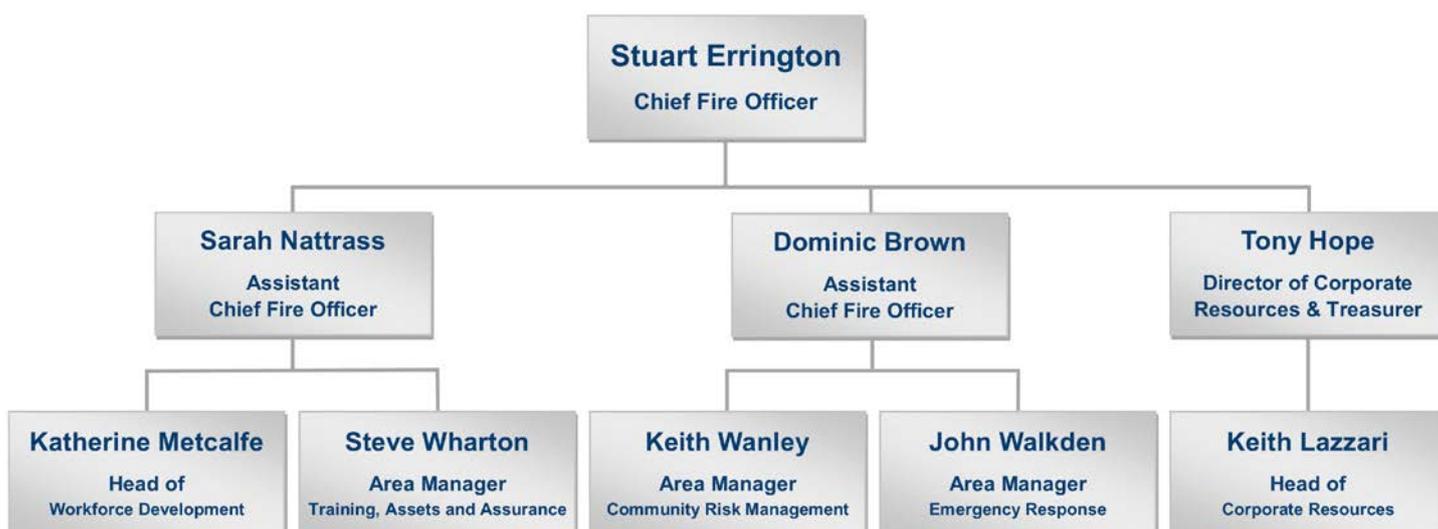
Our 3-year strategy contains more information on the risks within our area: [3-year plan](#)

Overview of our fire and rescue service

Overview of our structure

The Service Leadership Team (SLT) provide the senior executive officer function within the Service. The Fire and Rescue Authority delegates to the SLT, the effective management of the organisation and its resources, the delivery of the primary corporate, operational and support services and the execution of the statutory responsibilities.

The Service Leadership Team is comprised of:



Our people & resources

The following table shows the number of staff employed (fulltime equivalents (FTE)) against the number of budgeted establishment posts as at 31 March 2017:

Employee Group	Establishment (FTE)	Strength (FTE)
Wholetime duty system firefighters	306	298
Retained (on-call) duty system firefighters	168	146.7
Fire Control	19	20.6
Corporate	80	87.68
Total	573	553.01

We have a front-line fleet of 27 fire engines, 18 specialist appliances plus a range of off-road four-wheel drive vehicles to help deal with an ever-increasing range of incident types, including:

- Aerial ladder platforms for performing rescue at height;
- Specialist rescue unit for road traffic collisions, structural collapse & animal rescue;
- Water Rescue boats & Flood Response Units for water related incidents;
- High volume pump, foam unit & bulk water carrier to provide water & foam;
- Incident response, environmental protection units for hazardous material incidents;
- Incident command vehicle & welfare unit to support large protracted incidents;
- 4x4 tactical response & wildfire vehicles to access hard to reach areas.

Our staff operate from 15 fire stations, a headquarters & 999 control building in Belmont, a training centre and technical services centre in Bowburn.



Our services to the community

The primary legislation associated with fire and rescue services in England and Wales is the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 which sets out the statutory responsibilities of the Authority for providing a fire and rescue service that has the people, equipment and training needed to carry out the following core functions:

Promoting fire safety (community safety) – the provision of information, advice and encouragement on the prevention of fires, restricting spread of fires in buildings and means of escape from fires. Our firefighters and other front-line staff undertake more than 18,000 safe & wellbeing visits each year, carry out fire and road safety talks in schools and work with partner agencies to inform our communities about fire and road safety.

Fire safety regulatory enforcement (business fire safety) – Our firefighters and fire safety officers undertake inspections of workplaces providing advice and guidance to owners and occupiers to enable them to be compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, ensuring our communities are safe, using enforcement action where necessary.

Emergency response – We respond to emergencies including fires, road traffic collisions, air and rail crashes, water rescues and flooding, hazardous chemical incidents and many other types of emergencies. Our firefighters regularly train, maintain and test equipment to ensure they remain operationally ready to respond to emergencies at all times.

We also work closely with our partners such as Durham Constabulary, the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS), local councils and our neighbouring fire and rescue services as part of the Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Principles (JESIP) to ensure we can respond effectively and competently to any emergency.

Governance arrangements

Your fire and rescue authority

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority is a combined authority created by the Durham Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996.

Membership comprises of twenty-one elected councillors from Durham County Council and four from Darlington Borough Council. The Authority is a legal body with statutory duties and responsibilities. The Authority is responsible for setting the strategic direction, policies and priorities of the Service.

Our legal responsibilities

The primary legislation governing the Fire and Rescue Service is covered by the following:

- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Service \(Emergencies\)\(England\) Order 2007](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)

The main legislative provisions which determine the functions of the Fire and Rescue Authority include the following:

- Promoting fire safety
- Extinguishing fires and protecting life and property
- Rescuing people from road traffic collisions (and a large range of other risks determined through the Emergencies Order)
- Responding to other types of emergencies
- Enter into 'reinforcement' schemes with other fire authorities for mutual assistance
- Assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning; and in this regard to:
 - Put in place emergency plans
 - Put in place business continuity management arrangements
 - Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency
 - Share information with other local responders to enhance coordination; and,
 - Cooperate with other local responders to enhance coordination and efficiency

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out the Governments priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England. The National Framework outlines the high-level expectations and it does not require a detailed account of operational matters which are best determined locally.

The key priorities established by the framework are:

- The identification and assessment of a range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks including those of a cross border, multi authority and/or a national nature;
- The provision for prevention and protection activities and the appropriate response to incidents within County Durham and Darlington;
- Collaboration with the communities of County Durham and Darlington and a wide range of partners both locally and nationally to deliver a fire and rescue service;
- Being accountable to the communities of County Durham and Darlington for the service we provide through an annual statement of assurance. ([current and previous versions](#))

The full document can be found at the following link: [Fire national framework for England](#)

Management of Risk

The Fire Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvements in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Integrated Risk Management Plan

The national framework requires the formulation of an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) which captures and publishes the Fire and Rescue Authorities plans to meet current and future risks to our communities.

Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) was a process introduced by the Government to provide a modern, flexible and risk-based approach to the provision of fire and rescue services based upon locally identified needs. The assessment of risk is the initial stage of the IRMP process and requires quantitative and qualitative analysis of hazards and threats. The processes we have adopted use a combination of risk modelling software, historical data and professional judgement to make an assessment of impact and consequence with likelihood that an event will occur, ensuring that a thorough and complete analysis has been completed.

The IRMP is our analysis of the county's community risk profile, together with our strategic plans to effectively manage that risk over the period.

The IRMP identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the communities, including those of a cross border, multi authority and/or national nature. While risk to property, infrastructure, the environment and our heritage are of significant importance in the work we do – it is risk to life that is given our highest priority.

The full document can be found at the following link: [3-year strategy 2018/19-2020/21](#)

The Framework provides that the Fire and Rescue Authority must hold their Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive to account for delivery of the fire and rescue service, also that the Authority must have in place arrangements to ensure that their decisions are open to scrutiny.

An extensive, 12-week consultation is undertaken each year as part of the development process for the IRMP. At the end of the consultation period all responses are collated, analysed and the results included in a fire authority report where councillors approve the content for publication.

Governance assurance

The Authority, as a public body, places significant emphasis on ensuring that effective governance arrangements are in place.

Governance is concerned with how the Authority manages its affairs on a day to day basis including business practices, standards of conduct and overall management procedures.

We have adopted an over-arching Organisational Assurance Framework based on the KPMG '3 lines of defence' model which forms an important part of our Authority's governance model.

[Organisational Assurance Framework](#)

The Authority operates in accordance with a Code of Corporate Governance that sets out the approach it takes to ensuring it operates in accordance with appropriate standards and frameworks. The Authority's Code of Corporate Governance is available below:

[The Code of Corporate Governance](#)

The Authority published an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) that sets out the key governance issues that the Authority has identified during the financial year. The Authority works towards mitigating these risks as part of its approach to ensuring an effective governance framework is in place.

[Annual Governance Statement 2015/16](#)

Financial Assurance

The Authority places significant importance in ensuring that its financial management arrangements are in line with the expectations of a public body.

An annual, independent audit is undertaken to review the Authority's Statement of Accounts, which summarise the financial position of the Authority at the end of the financial year and its performance throughout the year.

The primary function of the external auditor is to express an opinion as to whether the Authority's financial statements are free from material misstatement. However, the auditor also has responsibility for assessing whether the Authority has reliable systems of control in place and the arrangements for securing, economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources.

The annual statement of accounts is considered and approved by the Authority's Audit and Risk Committee prior to being published. [Statement of Accounts](#)

The accounts are audited by independent external auditors who provide a view on the information contained in the accounts being 'true and fair'. The auditor considers whether the Authority has demonstrated it has delivered value for money prior to signing the audit statement. [Annual Audit Letter – audit of accounts](#)

Operational Assurance

Our Organisational Performance Framework is underpinned by our Operational Assurance Framework that sets our approach to quality assuring that we can respond effectively and competently to the range of incidents we may be called to attend. A number of key performance indicators are used to monitor performance of our response arrangements. Managers at all levels are accountable for managing the day to day performance of their fire stations overseen by their District Teams and the Emergency Response Manager. The Operational Assurance Group (OAG) scrutinise performance and report, by exception, to the Performance & Programme Board (PPB) and the Service Leadership Team. Members play a key role in scrutinising performance through regular reports and presentations to the Policy and Performance Committee and the full Fire Authority. [Operational Assurance Framework](#)

Our Operational Readiness Audits (OpeRA) assess the operational readiness of our stations across six areas (Premises, Appliances, Equipment, PPE, Personnel, and Practical Skills). District Management teams undertake quarterly audits of their stations.

The Operational Assurance Group (OAG) exists to monitor, report and act on the outcomes from active monitoring, incident debriefs and national operational learning. Membership of the group is drawn from a cross-section of key departments with the chair of the OAG reporting bi-monthly to the PPB. The arrangements for reporting and escalating the outcomes from

active monitoring and debriefs have recently been strengthened to improve organisational learning and the latest national operational learning guidance. Outcomes from multi-agency debriefs are routinely shared.

Community & Business Safety (Prevention & Protection) Assurance

All prevention activities carried out by the central team are subject to annual quality management auditing both internally and externally as well as performance being reviewed at all Section meetings and an overview provided at PPB. We have held ISO 9001 accreditation for our quality management system in Community Safety since March 2012.

A comprehensive Risk Based Audit Policy (RBAP) exists to support our protection activities, underpinned by an ISO9001 accredited Quality Management System. The RBAP is underpinned by a full suite of procedures and practice notes which give guidance to staff enforcing statutory fire safety legislation. We have taken account of our legal duties and guidance borne from the Fire & Rescue Services Act and the Fire Safety Order, National Framework, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Local Government Association (LGA) Circulars and any other relevant guidance. External ISO audits provide assurance that we are doing what we say we will do.

The RBAP & Annual Audit Workload Programme are refreshed annually using intelligence gained from a range of sources including national guidance, statistical data, as well as local and national trends. As well as local intelligence gained from engagement with partners and post incident audits, we also utilise the specialist CFRMIS (Community Fire Risk Management Information System) software to inform the RBAP.

A well-established Operational Risk Information (ORI) inspection process and programme exists to capture important information on risks that firefighters may face when responding to emergencies. This information is made available via appliance mobile data terminals (MDT). Processes exist to ensure premises risks identified by fire safety inspectors are shared with emergency response managers for onward dissemination to our firefighters.

Health & Safety Assurance

We have an established suite of key health & safety (H&S) performance indicators that enable us to closely monitor performance at all levels. The indicators cover areas such as staff sickness, personal and vehicle accidents, near misses and cause for concerns as well as fitness assessment outcomes. Staff across the Service can access the information via SharePoint and the performance management software. The Assurance Manager produces a monthly H&S report which is reported to the SLT and Fire Authority. It is also discussed at the Joint H&S Committee which is attended by the Fire Brigades Union.

Our Operational Assurance Framework illustrates how the learning outcomes from internal and external events identified through accident investigations, debriefs, active monitoring reports and stakeholder engagement are implemented via forums such as the OAG, PPB, the Corporate Wellbeing Group and the quarterly joint H&S Committee. Information is shared with staff via H&S Newsletters and H&S Newsflashes.

Our Operational Active Monitoring and Debrief processes have H&S at the core and are managed within the same section as H&S and use the OSHENS software system to track actions arising.

Measuring and evaluating H&S performance is a key part of the OHSAS 18001 standard for which we have held accreditation for over 8 years. We actively respond to safety events when they do occur, ensuring learning is acted upon.

We have an established programme of proactive station inspections, undertaken jointly with the FBU, and internal audits led by the Assurance Section to provide assurance on the effectiveness of our health and safety management arrangements. Our OpeRA also provide a further level of quality assurance.

The Head of Assets & Assurance produces an annual H&S report that evidences how our approach to setting challenging targets for improving performance is delivering real results.

Training Assurance

Our District Management teams are responsible for quality assuring the competency levels of their staff and ensuring that the competency recording system is kept up to date. Outcomes of the quarterly district audits are reported to the Emergency Response Manager.

The OpeRA framework use to provide assurance of operational readiness of all our fire stations includes dip-sampling of training records and also themed practical exercises undertaken at the training centre to further quality assure the competency of firefighters.

All internal and external delegates attending our training courses and development days are invited to complete evaluation forms. These are analysed by the Training Manager and used to inform improvements in delivery.

As a result of active monitoring, incident debrief outcomes and our OpeRA audits, we have changed our approach to training delivery in a number of areas. For example, we delivered enhanced water awareness training at three key fire stations to take account of the specific water risks in those areas.

Our training department have the ISO 9001 accreditation for our quality management system.

Our Focus

Our vision

To respond effectively to the challenges we face as a fire and rescue service, we need to be clear on our strategic direction. A defined vision, strategic priorities, values and behaviours are key to us doing this. During 2016/17, we undertook a full review of these. Our vision is simple...

We want to have the **safest people** and **safest places**.

Our strategic priorities

The Authority is focussed on managing risks and ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively to reduce the number of emergency incidents and the associated risk of injury or death in the local area.

To help us achieve our vision we have six strategic priorities:



Our values

These values are known in our organisation as the PIE values.

Professional, Innovative, Effective.

To be the best fire and rescue service in the UK there are certain behaviours all members of our organisation are expected to display at work. The range of behaviours fall into four areas:

- How we approach challenges;
- How we conduct ourselves;
- How we collaborate with others;
- How we drive change across the organisation to make a difference.

How well people are demonstrating these behaviours as part of their day to day job are assessed in the appraisal system.

Equality & Inclusion

We are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in both the service we deliver to the community and the employment of our staff. Equality, diversity and inclusion is about understanding and respecting differences and ensuring the right people receive the right services. We also understand that a diverse workforce with individuals who can offer different skills, experience and knowledge will benefit us as an organisation and ensure we are able to meet the needs of the diverse community we serve.

We have published our strategic commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and our equality objectives in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. This is a public declaration and commitment of how we plan to meet the duties placed upon us by equality and diversity legislation and best practice, in managing our staff and meeting the needs and wishes of our local population.

Our equality action plan runs alongside the equality and diversity strategy and members of our equality, diversity and inclusion working group are responsible for developing and implementing the action plan. [Further information regarding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.](#)

Collecting and analysing equality data is an important way of developing our understanding about our employees and communities. We produce an [annual equality report](#) that shows how we comply with the general equality duty as well as publishing our gender pay gap, both of which are available on our website.

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities like County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service have a legal obligation to comply with the general equality duty. This incorporates nine protected characteristics age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

To meet our statutory obligations, when exercising our functions, we must aim to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In addition to the general duty, all public sector bodies are required to meet specific duties which are incorporated into the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires us to:

- Publish diversity information annually to demonstrate our compliance with the general duty;
- Prepare and publish specific and measurable equality objectives.

Our challenges and priorities during 2017-18

In the face of an ongoing reduction in government funding, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority remains committed to protecting front line services to the public by ensuring that there is no increase in risk and no change to emergency response standards. In spite of the challenging financial circumstances, the Authority has been successful in achieving efficiency savings which has enabled it to balance the budget, whilst at the same time protecting front line services.

The Authority has set a balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year (2018/19) and needs to identify a further £0.7M of savings during the period 2019/20 to 2021/22. Work is ongoing through a comprehensive review of emergency response provision to identify further savings options to assist in balancing the budget in future years.

Our 3-year strategic plan 2018/19 – 2020/21 set out 5 key development priorities. These were:

These areas were:

- Explore opportunities to collaborate with partners
- Maximise use of our buildings
- Expand the role of our fire fighters and staff
- Review our staffing levels and arrangements for emergency response
- Explore opportunities for income generation

Our achievements include:

Barnard Caste quad-station - The opening of the UK's first ever quad-services station in Barnard Castle. Opened in March 2017 and shared by ourselves, Durham Constabulary, NEAS and the Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team.

Fire-fighter Apprentices - In May 2017, the service welcomed its first ever apprentice firefighters who are now half way through completion of an intensive two-year firefighter and business fire safety programme aimed at preparing them to be firefighters of the future. Our scheme enables the apprentices to spend the first 12 months based at headquarters where they spend time in every department learning how the organisation works whilst attending college and completing a qualification in community safety. In year two, they spend time at different fire stations and watches across the service area learning the role of a firefighter and responding to emergencies. The ground-breaking scheme has been a huge success and the Service was recognised in 2017 as one of the top 100 Apprenticeship Employers. Following a review of the programme and our workforce planning requirements, the second cohort of apprentices start with the Service in 2018.

Safe and Wellbeing visits - The service introduced Safe and Wellbeing visits in February 2016 which enhanced the traditional home fire safety check to include assessment and referrals for health interventions and we delivered 18,884 Safe and Wellbeing Visits.

Young Fire-fighters Association - Responding to consultation with the public we've made fantastic progress in expanding our Young Firefighters association and cadet schemes and currently have 9 different schemes running.

Safer homes – We have launched our Safer Homes project which has seen us working closely with our partners at Durham Constabulary and Durham County Council. This project involved working with social housing providers to fit properties with domestic sprinklers.

Partnership with NEAS - In January 2016 we began a trial with NEAS to provide an emergency medical response to people living in Darlington, Consett, Seaham and Stanhope. At the time of writing our fire fighters have attended 4,336 emergency medical response calls since the start of the trial. Two of our crews have received Chief Fire Officer commendations for the role they played in dealing with emergency medical response situation.

Training centre at Bowburn - We opened a state of the art training centre at Bowburn near Durham offers a first-class facility for fire ground training and has substantially enhanced our capacity to offer classroom based leadership, management and incident command development training as well as a wide range of practical business safety courses.

Collaboration with partners - We have collaborated with partners to maximise the space and facilities offered at Durham fire station. Our incident command suite at our training centre are shared with Durham Constabulary.

Police and ambulance tri responders - The service along with Durham Constabulary and NEAS have introduced the regions first tri-responders. The tri-responders are based at Stanhope and fulfil the role of PCSO for Durham Constabulary, on-call fire fighters for ourselves and first responders for NEAS. This is only the second project of its kind in the country.

Our performance during 2017/18

The following tables provide an overview of our performance during 2017/18. The latest statistics on fires, casualties, false alarms and non-fire incidents attended by all fire and rescue services in England are available online: [Fire Statistics - England](#)

Prevention

Performance Indicator	Objective	Q4 2017/18 Actual	Q4 Target	Actual vs Target	2016/17 Q4 Actual	Actual vs Previous Year
PI 01 - Deaths Arising from Accidental Fires in Dwellings	Down	0	0	0%	2	100%
PI 02 – Primary Fires	Down	1058	916	-15.5%	973	-8.7%
PI 03 – Number of Accidental Dwelling Fires	Down	240	230	-4.3%	213	-12.7%
PI 04 - Injuries Arising from Accidental Dwelling Fires	Down	20	25	+20%	24	+16.7%
PI 05 - Total Secondary Fires	Down	2645	2225	-18.9%	2151	-23.0%
PI 07 – Number of Safe & Wellbeing Visits	Up	19554	18000	+8.6%	18932	+3.3%
PI 42 - Proportion of Safe & Wellbeing Visits to High Risk People/Properties	Up	82.3%	75%	+7.3%	75.9%	+6.4%

PI01 – There have been no accidental dwelling fire (ADF) fatalities reported this year, this compares to two in the previous year. Safe and wellbeing visits (SWV) were introduced in February 2016 and have provided additional support to vulnerable people with health and wellbeing issues and risks associated with ADF fatalities. Throughout the year operational crews have been targeting their SWV into high risk areas across the service using the ward-based risk tool. Also, a new tool which improves identification of vulnerable people is in development.

PI03 – The service this year experienced a slightly higher number of ADFs than anticipated with 240 against a target of 230, this was also an increase of 12.7% against the previous year performance. Most of these additional incidents occurred in Peterlee who experienced an increase of 15 ADFs from the previous year. The main cause of fire is cooking appliances; therefore, crews will continue to focus on kitchen safety during SWVs.

PI04 – Although during 2017/18 the service experienced a 12.7% increase in the number of ADFs, the number of injuries from these reduced by 16.7% to 20 compared to 24 the previous year. The majority of injuries were classed as slight (14) with only 6 injuries being recorded as serious. The gender of victims was evenly split 10/10; however, of the 6 victims suffering serious injuries, 5 of these were male and 1 female. The reduction in injuries is pleasing; however, fire related injuries occurring in the kitchen are still prevalent across the service which aligns with cooking appliances being the main cause of fires in the home, this further strengthens the rationale to focus on kitchen safety during SWVs.

PI07 – The number of SWV's delivered has exceeded the target with 19554 SWVs delivered, 8.6% above target. As detailed above, the service has, following a general 10-year reduction, experienced a higher than anticipated number of ADFs. Many of the stations, including Peterlee, who have experienced an increase in ADFs have attained and or exceeded the number of SWVs. Although the target of 18000 SWVs has been exceeded in two consecutive years, the target has not been increased for 2018/19 to allow crews more time in individual properties where needed, this combined with the new vulnerable people-based targeting tool will ensure our resources are focused on reducing risk in the home.

PI42 - At the end of the year the total number of SWVs delivered to high risk people or places was 82.3% which is an increase of 6.4% from last year, this demonstrates improved targeting of resources into the most vulnerable households.

PI02 – During the 2017/18 period the service attended 1058 primary fires against a target of 916, this is also an increase of 8.7% against the previous year's performance. 52.1% of all primary fires this year were recorded as deliberate. The most prominent type of primary fire was road vehicles - 452 (42.7%), followed by dwellings - 311 (29.4%), these figures include both accidental and deliberate fires. Haswell and Shotton ward continues to have the highest incident rate with 61 primary fires, 82% were deliberate, followed by Wingate with 46 primary fires, 93% were deliberate. The service average for deliberate primary fires is 52.1%. Partnership work has continued throughout the year particularly in the Easington area and it is hoped that the "Enough is Enough" campaign & branding and a dedicated Firestoppers telephone line will be effective in reducing these levels of activity going into 2018/19. The service has been instrumental in influencing the development of the Empty Buildings Protocol, developed with a range of partners including Police, DCC, Planning, Housing etc. The protocol gives partners a one stop gateway to report empty properties or unsecure buildings for appropriate action based on a risk matrix.

PI05 – Secondary fires have been another area of concern throughout the year which has resulted in a year-end total of 2645 against a target of 2225, this is also an increase of 23% against the previous year's performance. 85.6% of all secondary fires this year were recorded as deliberate. The higher than anticipated figure was heavily influenced by the number of fires experienced in Q1 with 453 and 403 fires reported in April and May respectively compared to 183 and 221 the previous year. The two most prominent fire types have been loose refuse and scrub land, which by using the fire escalation process via the MAPs, have been the target of partnership work across the service.

Protection

Performance Indicator	Objective	Q4 2017/18 Actual	Q4 Target	Actual vs Target	2016/17 Q4 Actual	Actual vs Previous Year
PI 10 - Primary Fires in Non-Domestic Premises	Down	71	90	+21.1%	81	+12.3%
PI 14 - False Alarms Caused by Automatic Fire Detection Equipment	Down	750	725	-3.4%	714	-5%
PI 17 – Number of Fire Safety Audits	Up	2135	2124	0.5%	2066	+3.3%

PI10 – There have been 71 primary fires in non-domestic premises this year which is 10 less than the previous year and continues a three-year reduction in this category. There are no premises types with significant numbers of fires to note but areas with higher numbers of fires include general retail and secure establishments. Smaller retail establishments will continue to be a focus of FSVOP audits and the business fire safety team and local district managers work with secure establishments as required to help to mitigate the number of fires reported in these premises notwithstanding the Fire Service have no statutory powers on crown property. As a result of fire safety audits this year there have been four prohibition notices served which have all been linked to sleeping accommodation on or above a workplace without adequate fire protection. The business fire safety team have worked closely with NHS safety officers this year which has helped support and promote fire safety in NHS premises.

PI14 – There have been 750 incidents this year which is 25 more than the predicted level and 5% more than the previous year. Approximately one quarter of actuations occurred in schools with a significant number over the summer period when they are closed for the holidays and building maintenance work was scheduled. The next main category is industrial manufacturing which has seen a range of actuations throughout the year due to faulty equipment. Responding to false alarms place demand on the Service and reduce capacity to deliver valuable prevention and protection work, therefore the business fire safety team will continue to provide advice and support to businesses to reduce demand in this area. This has proved to be an effective way of helping to reduce unwanted fire signals.

PI17 – There have been 2135 fire safety audits conducted this year which is just over the predicted target level. Both emergency response crews and the business fire safety team have contributed to completing audits on or above target levels. As part of fire safety audits this year there have been four prohibition notices served which have all been linked to sleeping accommodation on or above a workplace without adequate fire protection, detection and separation. Close work has taken place throughout the year with the Care Quality Commission [CQC] in relation to residential care premises. The business fire safety team share information from audits as required in relation to non-conformances and in addition have been able to conduct fire safety audits where the CQC have identified issues. One example of this was a residential care home where the CQC contacted the fire safety team with concerns regarding fire separation and the fire alarm system. An urgent audit took place by the business fire safety team and as a result enforcement action was issued.

Response

Performance Indicator	Objective	Q4 2017/18 Actual	Q4 Target	Actual vs Target	2016/17 Q4 Actual	Actual vs Previous Year
Total Emergency Calls Received (including EMR)		16761			17167	-2.4%
Total Incidents (excluding EMR)		7273			6518	+11.6%
Total Fires		3781			3188	+18.6%
Total False Alarms		2316			2235	+3.6%
Total Special Services (excluding EMR)		1175			1093	+7.5%
Total Road Traffic Collisions		324			322	+0.6%
Total Emergency Medical Response (EMR)		707			2675	N/A
PI 06 – Number of Response Standards Met	Up	4	6	-33.3%	4	0%
PI 12 – % Retained Availability on Stations	Up	73.4%	90%	-16.6%	77.2%	-3.8%

PI06 – The Service has achieved 4 out the 6 response times in this PI, however this is reflective of the previous year’s performance. This has been influenced by underperformance in the Dwelling Fires Attended in 8 minutes PI and the Non-Domestic Property Fires attended in 11 minutes, failing the secondary tolerance and primary tolerance levels respectively. A response time failure report is published every week by the Information Services Team. Each individual response time failure is scrutinised by the district management teams and discussed with the Officer in Charge of the appliance to determine a reason for failure. The service procedure OP/2/34 was reviewed last year and contains specific detail for crews preparing for emergency response including expectations for time taken to dress before turnout prior to booking mobile from the time of call.

PI12 - The annual cumulative average total for retained availability is 73.4% which is slightly lower than the same period last year. Of the 16 On Call appliances only 5 were available on or above the 90% target, 4 were available between 76% to 90% of the time with another 4 returning cumulative availability of between 51% to 75%. 3 On Call appliances were available for between 0 and 50%. Throughout the year the second On Call appliances at Crook, Spennymoor and Barnard Castle were available on average 37.8%. The On-Call recruitment continues to be a challenge, however the Human Resources and Communication teams at headquarters are working hard to develop a central attraction and recruitment strategy based around the national model. One of the options from the Emergency Response Review was to staff Spennymoor day crew appliance with On-Call staff. The service is currently running a hybrid option around this which looks to incrementally release posts to be filled by On-Call staff from across the service.

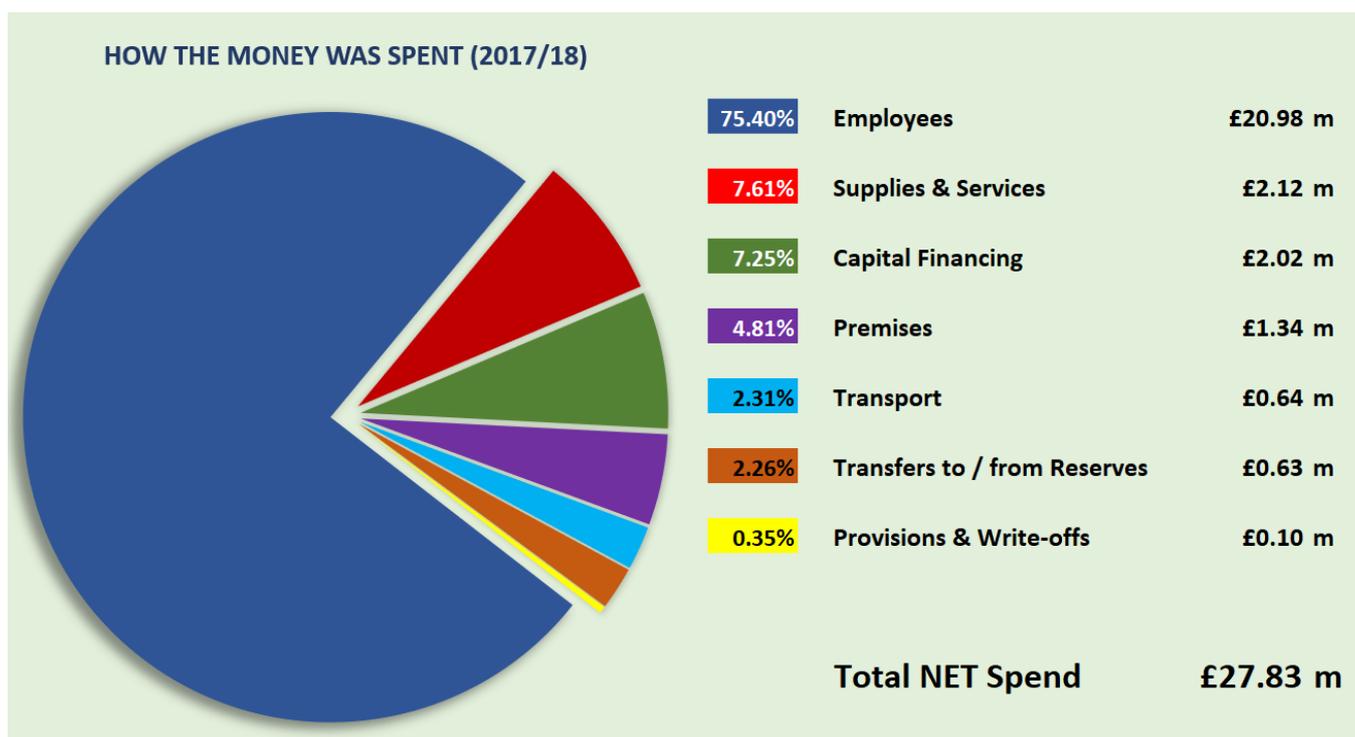
Financial performance (statement of accounts)

Our budget for 2017/18

The total net revenue expenditure for 2017/18 was **£27.826M** which was £21,000 more than the original budget of £27.805M. When the original budget was set the actual amount of grant due in relation to the business rates retention scheme was not known. We received £21,000 more than the original budget which offset the £21,000 increase in net expenditure.

Funding for our fire and rescue service in 2017/18 was provided from two main sources: the government provides 36% of our funding by way of grant; the remaining 64% is received from local council tax payers and non-domestic ratepayers in County Durham and Darlington.

Revenue expenditure 2017/18



During 2017/18 an additional revenue contribution of £0.821M was made to finance capital expenditure which will reduce the need to borrow in future years. The total underspend on ordinary activities (excluding transfers to/ from reserves) was £0.589M.

Capital Expenditure 2017/18

Budget Heading	Original £000	Actual £000	Variance	
Vehicles, Plant and Equipment	367	220	-147	-40.05%
Buildings – Minor Works	250	170	-80	-32.00%
Total Expenditure	617	390	-227	-36.79%

The capital budget for 2017/18 was underspent by £0.227M due to changes to the planned replacement of some items of equipment together with a decision not to proceed with building alteration works at the training centre.

Our future plans

The last few years has seen some of the most significant cuts to public spending ever known. This means to continue offering a first-class fire and rescue service to people living, working and visiting County Durham and Darlington we must be innovative and do things differently. This means collaborating with partners more, looking at ways we can enhance and widen the traditional fire fighter role, changing the way we recruit our people and developing our culture.

Further details on our future plans can be found in our consultation on the next 3-year strategy which can be viewed here: [3-year strategy & IRMP 2018/19-2021/22 consultation](#)

Our community engagement

How you can become involved

You can get involved with the work of the Fire Authority by attending the public meetings that are held regularly by the Authority at our headquarters. You can find out more about the Fire Authority, its work and access documents from previous and future meetings on our website via this link: [Combined Fire Authority information](#)

We value the views of our communities to ensure we are providing the service you need. We consult formally on the ways in which we propose to deliver services – particularly when developing our 3-year strategy and our annual IRMP. More information about our plans and priorities can be found on our website. www.ddfire.gov.uk

You can also find us on social media by searching for @CDDFRS

Access to information

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service is committed to being open, accountable and transparent to the population it serves and the general public as a whole. The service is constantly striving to develop a culture of greater openness and awareness. It is important that information of public interest is widely and easily available.

More information on our arrangements in respect of access to data and information can be found on our website via the following link: [Access to Information](#)

How to make a compliment or a complaint

We aim to make it as easy as possible for people to let us know their views. Through listening and learning we improve the quality of the services we provide, and encourage and recognise good practice by our staff.

We want to hear from people if they:

- Would like to compliment us on a job well done;
- Have a suggestion on how we might improve services;
- Feel we have fallen short of their expectations;
- Feel we have fallen short of the standards we set ourselves in dealing with complaints.

There are several ways in which you can compliment, comment or complain about our services either online via our website: www.ddfire.gov.uk

By phone: 0845 305 8383

By email: ServiceHQ@ddfire.gov.uk

By post: County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service HQ
Belmont Business Park
Durham,
DH1 1TW