



DEVON &  
SOMERSET  
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

# CRMP strategic review statement 2024

## Introduction

When launching our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) in 2022, we committed to reviewing and reporting on our progress annually. Our annual review looks at our progress against each strategic priority set out in the plan.

More information can be found here: [CRMP 2022 - 2027 Actions](#)

We also review our incident data to look at what has happened over the last year and compare it to the forecasts used in our original plan. This helps us identify any significant variations from what is expected and allows us to investigate the reasons behind these and adjust our plans if we need to. We also look at changes in our Service or operating environment that have impacted or could impact on our plans.

The annual report outlines the key achievements of the Service in the main areas of People, Prevention, Protection and Response, provides a summary of our finances and resources and gives an overall view of our work and performance in 2024 and our future plans. You will find more information about our work and a copy of our CRMP on our website: [www.dsfire.gov.uk](http://www.dsfire.gov.uk)

# About us

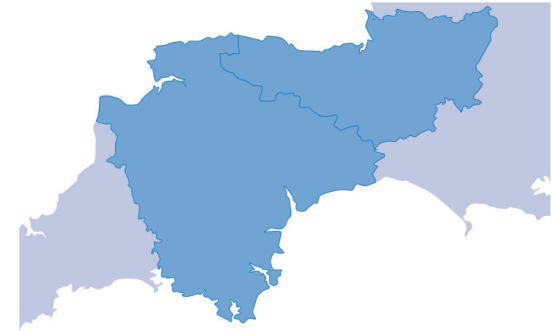
We have:



**83**  
fire  
stations



**303** emergency  
response vehicles



We are the largest  
non-metropolitan fire  
and rescue service in  
England, covering almost  
**4,000** square miles



**2,000** dedicated staff



We protect  
**850,000** households,  
**79,000** businesses  
and a further  
**1.1 million** visitors a year



# Priority one

Our targeted prevention and protection activities reduce the risks in our communities, improving health, safety, and wellbeing, and supporting the local economy.

By preventing fires and other emergencies from happening, we can make Devon and Somerset a safer place for everyone to live, work and visit. Our prevention work is focused on road safety, water safety, home safety, safeguarding and partnerships. We are guided by the duties placed on us by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Our protection teams work closely with businesses supporting them in meeting fire safety legislation. The team uses the regulatory powers where necessary to enforce the legislation.

Our community safety departments use data to plan campaigns, target the right people and deliver intervention and education at the most effective time. We also develop behaviour change campaigns, based on local risks and informed by data and insight. We have launched an annual calendar of prevention campaigns and communication activities. We align the timings of our campaigns with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) campaign calendar. [PSG - Fire Kills Calendar 2024](#)

Our data analysis team produces data and risk maps to ensure we target our interventions at those most at risk. We use various data sets to identify high-risk individuals and locations, such as those who have had multiple fires and other risk factors. Our wholetime crews are now using targeted data for their prevention work, to reduce incidents as well as injuries and fatalities.

Safeguarding training, which includes information on identifying and reporting concerns to our Safeguarding team, has been rolled out Service-wide and is mandatory training for all staff.



**We delivered 18,839 home fire safety visits, with around a quarter of these generated through our partners.**

We have established partnerships with a variety of organisations who refer vulnerable clients for home safety visits and request our support at community events such as open days, talks and community fetes. We work closely with our internal communications team to create a regular newsletter that our partners can 'opt-in' to receive. In addition, we have 'safety alerts' which include information on emerging risks to the community which go to all partners and is not opt-in.

Following Grenfell and the implementation of the Fire Safety England Regulations 2022, our protection work was focused on ensuring that buildings over 18 metres tall complied with fire safety legislation. Now, following national guidance and feedback the Protection team is starting to focus on buildings 11 metres -18 metres tall. The Protection team continues to lobby the government, where possible, to promote the installation of sprinklers or water mist suppression systems in high-risk housing.

Beyond fire safety, the proactive work from our teams has been recognised nationally, with the Service becoming the NFCC Lead for Young Drivers and Regional Lead for Road Safety, as well as playing a pivotal role in the national Pre-driver Theatre and Workshop Education Research (PdTWER) by Dr Elizabeth Box. More can be read about this piece of work here: [RAC Foundation - DSFRS Collaboration](#)

Young motorcycle riders are disproportionately represented in our road traffic collision (RTC) statistics to address this we are piloting a new intervention in several local colleges and feedback is being acquired to inform its future development. This work is running concurrently with existing campaigns such as [Learn2Live: \(Keeping Young People Safe On Our Roads | Learn2Live](#) and [Biker Down: Biker Down – Would You Know What To Do?](#)

We continue to invest in activities to prevent accidental drowning and promote water safety, with a target of halving the number of people who accidentally drown in the area by 2026. While we continue to train and equip our staff to be able to respond to water incidents, the bigger impact on reducing accidental drownings comes through education and the provision of safety equipment, and this is where we focus our efforts. The Community Safety team is working actively with the RNLI, police, schools, colleges, councils and charities to provide education, support campaigns and supply lifesaving equipment at key locations.

More information on our activities can be found here: [Water safety | Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service](#)

Throughout the summer, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service attended several events, advising people on how to become 'Wildfire Warriors' in their communities. More information on our wildfire campaign and how to become a 'Wildfire Warrior' within your community can be found through our website - [Firefighters launch wildfire campaign | Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service](#)



**We delivered 117 road safety interventions, 57 were focused on young drivers and 28 were focused on motorcyclists. We reached an audience of almost 28,000 people.**



## Looking forward

We are aware of the Government's *Better Regulation Framework* and the main purpose of this framework is to support new regulations. We also acknowledge that it places a strong emphasis on assessing existing regulations to make sure they are still accomplishing their goals. We are currently seeking to fully understand the framework's scope and assess any impact it may have on our regulatory activity.

We have two cadet units with plans to open a further one later in the year. We have launched a pilot of the 'Phoenix' programme, which works closely with young people on fire station grounds, developing lifesaving skills. Run in partnership with senior schools and referral agencies, the Phoenix programme builds life skills and confidence for those most vulnerable to serious violence, aiming for a lasting, positive impact.

Analysis of the underlying reasons for the causes of unwanted fire signals is underway.

**We completed  
2,591 fire safety  
checks and  
857 fire safety  
audits, providing  
advice and  
interventions  
to commercial  
premises.**





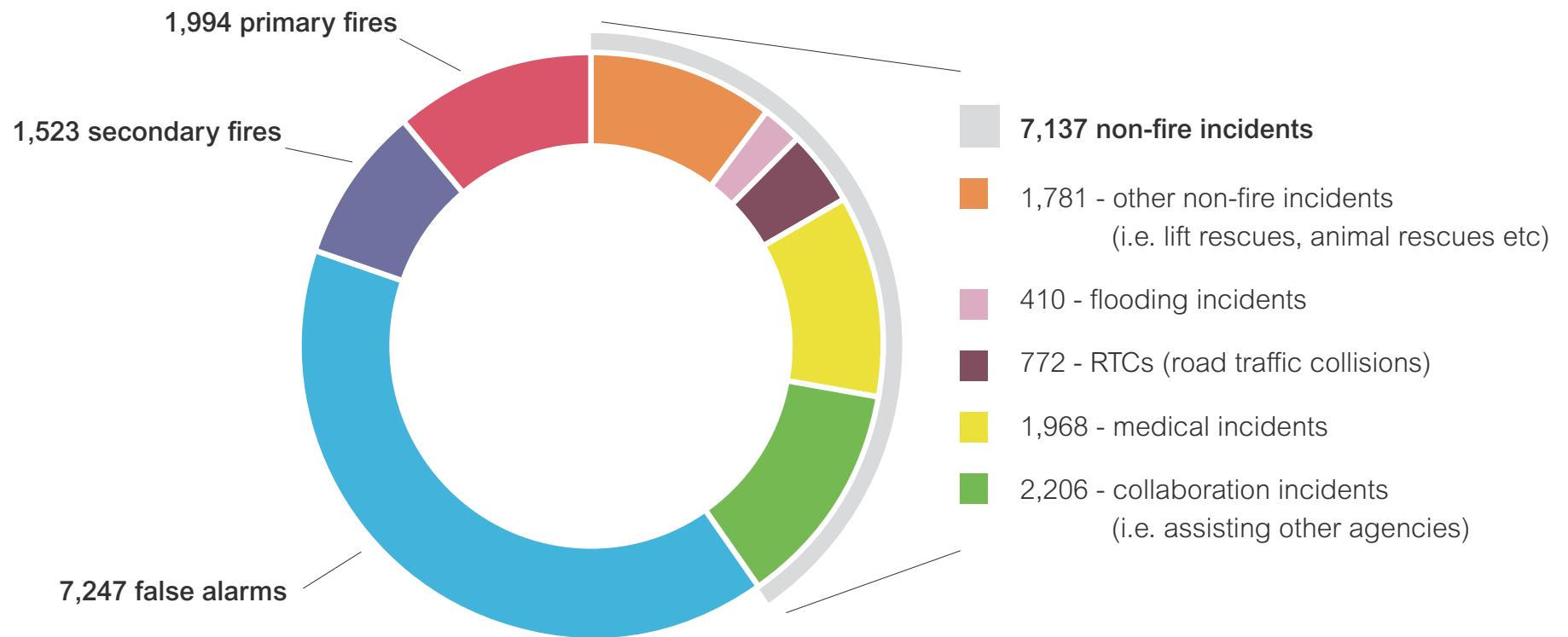
## Priority two

Our operational resources provide an effective emergency response to meet the local and national risks identified in our Community Risk Management Plan.

Fire and rescue services operate in an ever-changing world, and we must ensure that our resources match the risks. This means having the right personnel and equipment in the right place at the right time, so we are there when we are needed.

### Incidents attended 2023/24

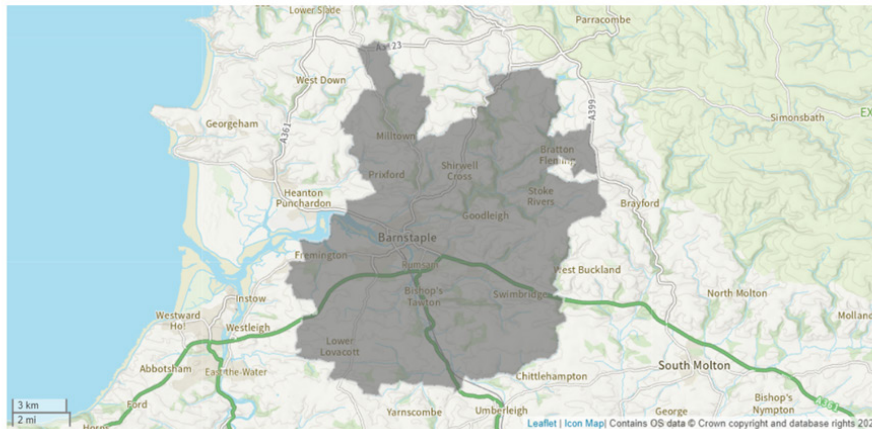
We attended **17,901** incidents including a total of **3,517 fires**, a reduction of **18.1%** from the previous year.



The first phase of the Local Community Plans (LCPs) for every fire station has been developed and is accessible to all staff. The plans provide a comprehensive picture of the community within the station's area, as well as availability for their appliances, activity and incident data. The accessibility and interactive nature of the plans mean that stations and departments can readily access useful information to help shape and improve their operations.

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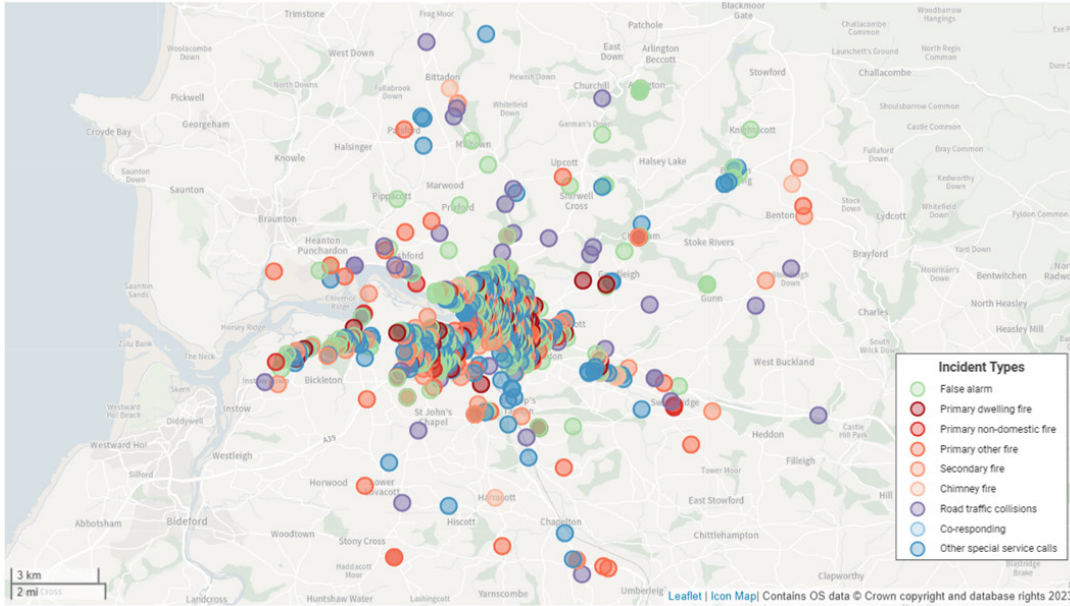
Select All (Select All) • Barnstaple (Station name) ▾



We handled **35,574** calls in 2023/24, a reduction of **5.9%** from the previous year



## Our Incidents

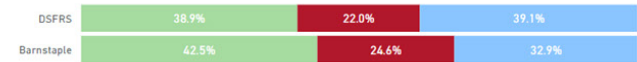


The activity information for this local community area is shown in the table below and map to the left. This information is the number of incidents attended with the station area irrespective of station or appliance attending.

IncidentCategory	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
<b>FalseAlarm</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>540</b>
<b>All</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>540</b>
<b>Fire</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>313</b>
Primary dwelling fire	21	20	21	62
Primary non-domestic fire	11	13	18	42
Primary other fire	21	16	20	57
Secondary fire	28	57	54	139
Chimney fire	7	2	4	13
<b>SpecialService</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>419</b>
Road traffic collisions	21	17	17	55
Co-responding	4	6	3	13
Other special service calls	122	112	117	351
<b>Total</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>1272</b>

### Percentage incidents by category

FalseAlarm ● Fire ● SpecialService



In 2023, work was completed to analyse the location and type of specialist vehicles that carry dedicated equipment and technology for specific incidents. The information from the review was used by our fleet department to help inform their fleet replacement programme.

In addition, a new information technology system, MORI (Management of Risk Information) has been developed to improve how we gather, assess and use the information to support our operational staff at incidents. The system records and provides key operational risk information. Any operationally useful information collected during prevention and protection activities is saved directly into the MORI system making it immediately available to operational crews. The MORI system joins the domains of prevention, protection and response. The system has been introduced across the Service supporting operational crews when attending incidents and training.

We have responded to the emerging demand to assist the ambulance service in moving bariatric patients. Specialist equipment and training has been provided to six crews strategically located, underpinned with newly created response plans, risk assessments and guidance.

Three new Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALP) have arrived in the Service and training has started. These vehicles will enhance our current capacity, providing access and rescue up to a height of 45m. We also have four new all-wheel drive Medium Rescue Pumps (MRPs) being delivered this year and four will follow next year.



**The Service  
attended 410  
flooding incidents  
in 2023/24**

In response to the Grenfell recommendations the Service implemented the use of escape (smoke) hoods and smoke curtains to aid in the safe evacuation of residents. It has introduced a system called Immediate Building Evacuation (IBE) to manage the systematic evacuation of larger or more complex buildings. This system is currently being further developed to make use of existing digital solutions to ensure the information being provided to our operational crews is real-time and consistent.

Extreme weather events have severe impacts on society, and we are responding to this by investing in specialist training such as for wildfire officers and flood response. The Service also maintains specialist equipment such as the Argocat and Groundhog all-terrain fire fighting vehicles. Our specialist rescue teams maintain a high level of preparedness with assets such as the Ionic boat, specifically designed to rescue people from inland flooding. We have ordered five new modern water carriers that are due in service in May 2025.

### **Looking forward**

The local community plans used by our staff are to be made accessible and interactive for the public through our website.

During 2024, we will be undertaking a fire cover review to analyse the use of our resources against our incident, risk, and capability data, to help us better understand our levels of cover. Once this initial high-level assessment has been completed, we will understand whether we need to make any changes to make the best use of our resources, ensuring they are in the correct location, with the right equipment and personnel. Further engagement and consultation where necessary will take place to help shape any business case.



# Priority three

Our Service is recognised as a great place to work: our staff feel valued, supported, safe, and well-trained to deliver a high performing fire and rescue service.

## People and culture

### **Learning and development:**

As an inclusive organisation, we want to create a learning culture which provides consistency and equality of opportunity to allow everyone to achieve their full potential. We will be innovative and creative in offering opportunities and career pathways for people to develop and to ensure they have the right skills.

A learning culture embeds learning into everything we do, whether at an individual, team or organisational level. This requires strong leaders to follow a strategic learning model and to support employees towards a shared vision and positive change through open dialogue and reflection.

Over the last three years, we have been evolving how we develop our future leaders. The key part of this change has been to go from reactive development and promotion processes to a pre-emptive one, informed by a well-structured workforce planning foundation. We have seen the introduction of development pools for future crew and station managers, where individuals have access to leadership training, qualifications and a host of different apprenticeship opportunities. Our corporate colleagues also have access to the same level of leadership development.

“Discussion on types of bias was interesting, I felt I knew a few but some I didn’t match up to existing behaviour so was interesting to learn.”

“I think the afternoon really gave colleagues the opportunity to ‘see’ how a potentially difficult conversation can play out rather than just reading material, which I think is far more beneficial in terms of learning.”

Quotes from participants of our leadership course.



## Looking forward

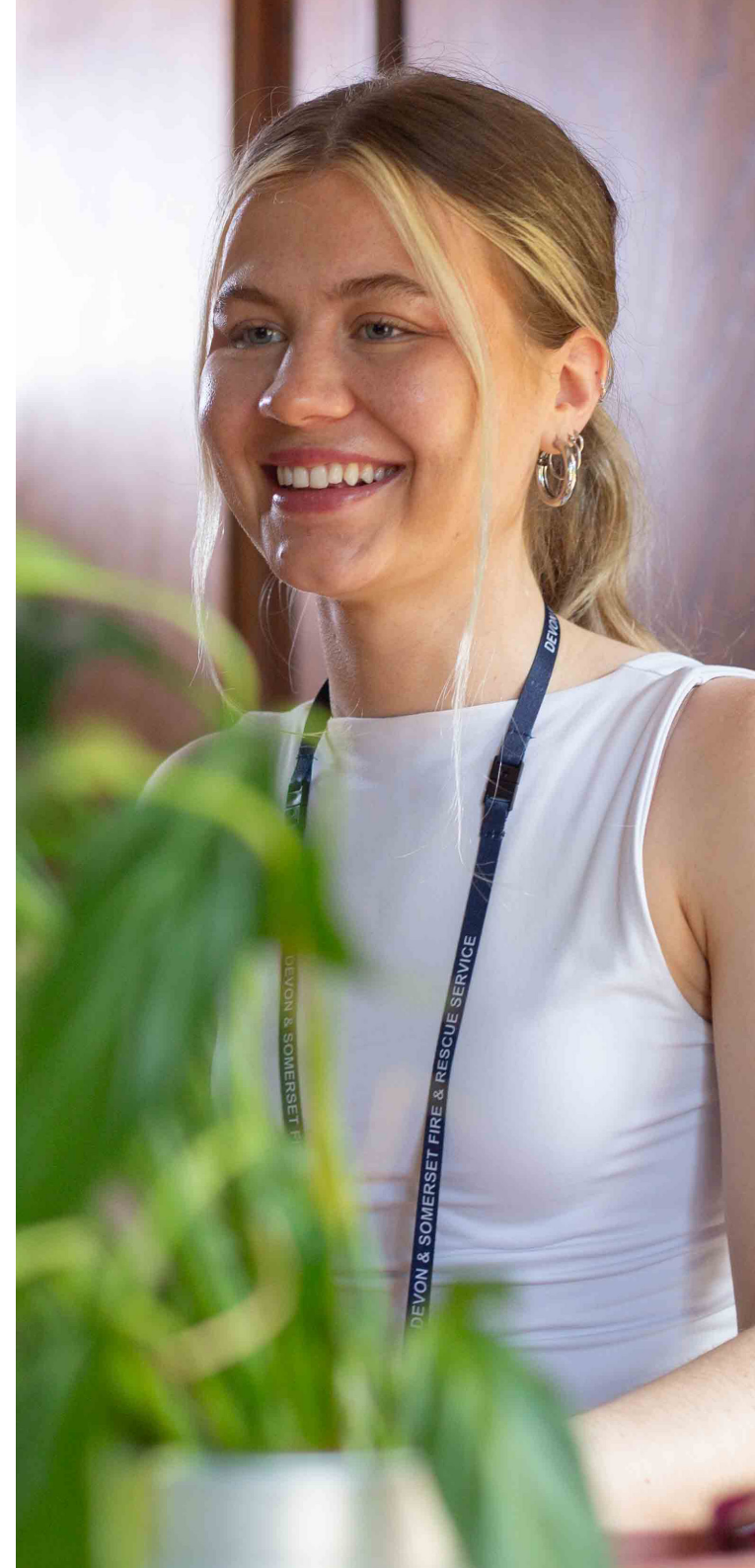
We will continue to develop leaders at all levels for the future, focusing on effective leadership styles, improving promotion processes and enhancing development programmes, all aligned with the NFCC Leadership framework. We will recognise those who uphold our values, ensure leadership accountability, promote a culture of continuous improvement, and implement consistent governance and decision-making processes

## Apprenticeships

### Apprenticeship awards

In May 2024, we won the Large Apprenticeship Employer of the Year Award alongside Bridgwater and Taunton College. The award recognised how we demonstrated a proactive commitment to the professional development of our personnel through our operational firefighter and operational manager apprenticeships.

Recognising the significance of higher education, we actively support our staff taking on advanced degrees and additional certification, relevant to their respective fields.



We will continue to work with colleges and other training providers to deliver tailored apprenticeships to all our employees, to ensure the best fit for individuals, and our organisation, to provide the best value for money. Apprenticeships are now utilised to deliver more in-depth knowledge, skills and behaviours as an alternative to previously used standalone qualifications or courses which were not eligible for levy funding.

### Looking forward

We will continue to use apprenticeships as the first option for development, whether technical or behavioural, to ensure that there is a consistent approach to development. The team will be working with other fire and rescue services to develop 'Fire Officer' apprenticeships of differing levels, to further reduce costs and simplify the delivery of development courses throughout all ranks.



## Culture

We are committed to creating an organisation which promotes openness and trust between our managers and staff. As part of our 'Safe To' approach we have been embedding the principles of psychological safety, and the link to personal safety, through our values, ethics, and behaviours training, which sets expectations, encourages discussions and promotes a self-reflective culture.

The 'Freedom to Speak Up' programme was officially launched in 2023 as an additional way for staff to raise concerns safely and confidentially. The team of 'Speak Up Guardians' is made up of a lead guardian and four additional guardians working within their current job roles on a part-time basis.

### **Staff wellbeing**

We have an extensive range of health and wellbeing support available including counselling, physiotherapy, occupational health services, reasonable adjustment support and medicals for a variety of roles. We analysed our data to enable us to better target support to those who may need it in a timely way.

All health and wellbeing processes have been reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose, and we have introduced new tools such as:

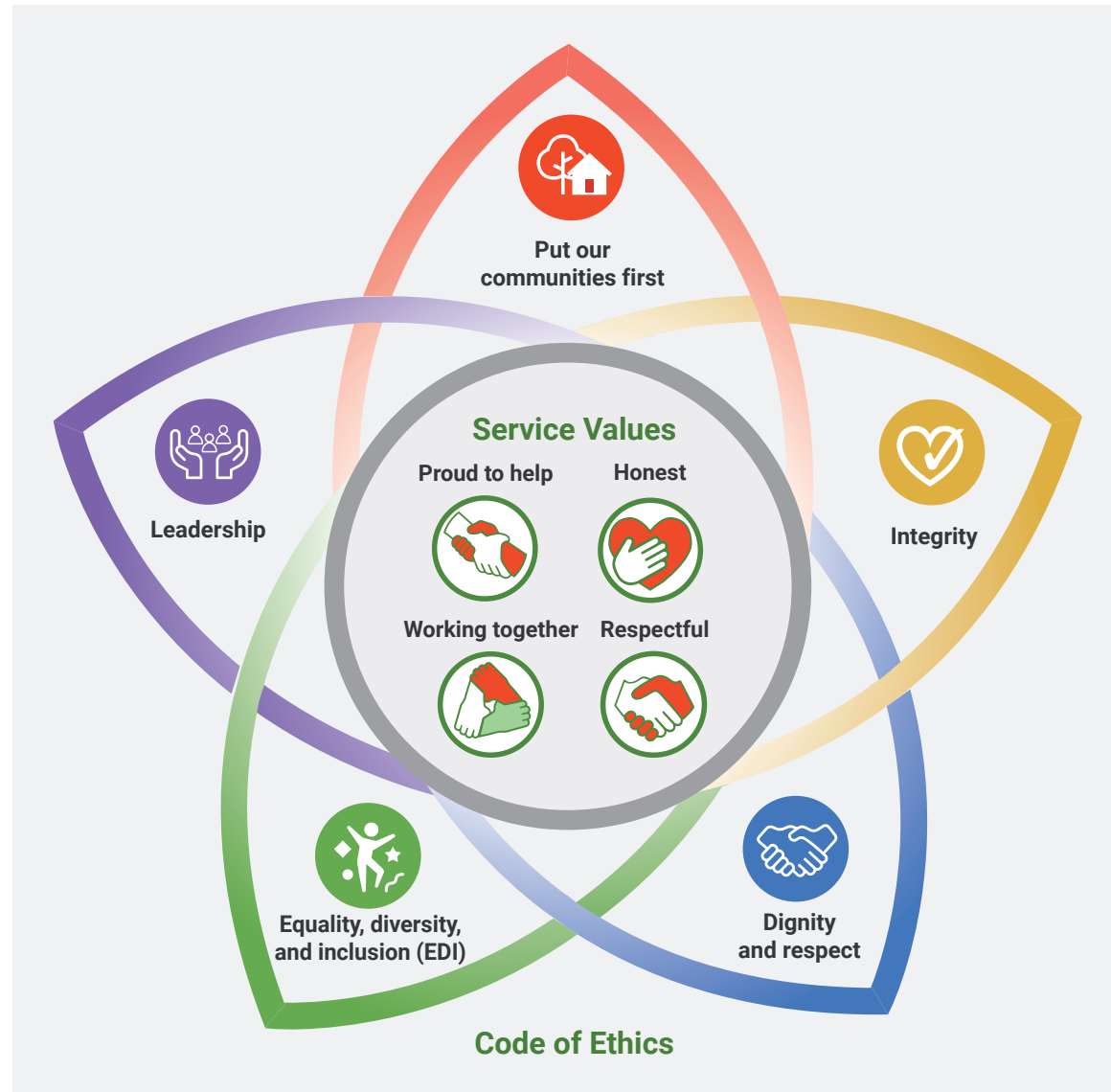
- a neurodiversity screening tool to support colleagues who may be neurodiverse, ensuring they have an appropriate support plan, or where there is a medical diagnosis, that reasonable adjustments are considered
- eLearning for mental health and stress awareness to help support individual resilience
- introduction of a drugs and alcohol procedure and a screening and support programme.

We engage with Occupational Health to support those who are returning to work. Additionally, our Health and Wellbeing Advisor is available to provide support and direct employees to our mental health and wellbeing resources.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion

Since 2022 we have embedded a new **Core Code of Ethics** alongside our **Service values**. The framework has provided clear guidance that supports our decision-making at all levels within the Service, providing an ethical compass and assisting us in dealing with challenging situations to ensure we make decisions that align with our core principles.

It is important that we live by our values and generate a positive environment where our staff feel empowered to influence, share knowledge and experiences, and have a voice to ensure we create and maintain a healthy culture within our organisation. Our new People Strategy 2024-2029 will outline the initiatives the Service will implement to support this.



To ensure our employees are supported we have a several staff support networks. These groups meet regularly and are integral to giving perspectives and guidance to leaders and our staff.

The Service attends Pride celebrations and Diversity festivals, to engage, deliver safety advice and talk about recruitment to our diverse communities, whilst also gaining insight and feedback to help design our services.

We have continued to work on engagement and positive action events within all recruitment processes. We hold monthly 'Have a Go' days for people who are interested in joining as an on-call firefighter, to gain an overview of the role and an understanding of the strength and fitness expectations. More information about our positive action events can be found through the website in the Have a Go Days section.

We work with ENEI (Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion) and have taken part in their TIDE (Talent, Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation) benchmarking assessment again in 2024. This assesses a range of areas where we are then benchmarked against other organisations to allow us to see where we can make improvements.

“Our Multicultural Staff Support Network has been set up by our staff, for staff from all cultural backgrounds. We have worked to ensure that the network provides a safe space for members of staff to discuss issues, share experiences and ideas relating to race, culture and ethnicity. Allies also attend and are free to ask questions and seek advice and guidance from those with lived experiences.”

**Yasarian Murfin**  
Chair of Multicultural Staff  
Support Network

Our Annual Workforce Diversity Report 2024 has been published, which highlights where we are doing well and where we must make improvements through recommendations. For more information on our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and annual Workforce Equality Report, please visit our website [Equality and diversity | Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service](#)

### **Looking forward**

We are committed to ensuring equality of access to all our services. Our Prevention team is actively working to increase our network of advocates from diverse communities, this however remains challenging due to issues around right-to-work visas. As with many current public services, the first port of call for the community is our website, this has been developed with accessibility in mind, with a translation tool and controls to be able to adjust the font size and colour contrast.

We will continue to promote the Service as an inclusive organisation for people from different communities to work for and interact with. A positive action event will be held at Middlemoor Fire Station in March 2025 for people from under-represented groups who are interested in becoming on-call firefighters. As part of a recruitment campaign for new wholetime firefighters, our attendance at Pride and Respect festivals in the summer of 2025 will be focused on recruitment opportunities and community safety awareness. We will continue to attend recruitment fairs, and we are using other media platforms such as the national Job and Careers Magazine, to target underrepresented groups. For more information, please visit our website [Careers | Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service](#).



“The Fire Pride and Allies network is a great resource to support others in the community and to encourage allies to get involved. For me the network gives voice to those who, historically, have been ignored and that feels empowering. I also strongly believe that organisations benefit hugely from input from diverse sources and that this network is a crucial part of that richness that will improve the Service for everyone.”

**Colin Barnard**  
Chair of Fire Pride and Allies



# Priority four

We are open and accountable, using our resources efficiently to deliver an effective, sustainable service that demonstrates improving public value.



The Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire requires all standalone fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) to produce an Efficiency and Productivity Plan for 2024/25, in line with guidance issued by the Home Office in December 2023. For more information on how our plan delivers against the national targets 2024 - 2025 [Productivity and Efficiency Plan](#).

### **Efficiency and effectiveness**

Our communities are facing a major challenge with climate change, and there is a political emphasis on decreasing greenhouse emissions and aiming for net zero by 2050. A sustainable programme has been created to aid ongoing efforts to reduce our environmental impact, with a goal of achieving carbon net zero by 2030. Our Environmental Strategy will outline the initiatives we will implement to support this.

To enable us to achieve our targets we are continuing to:

- build on investments in 2023. The electric vehicle charging infrastructure is being expanded, with electric pool cars becoming more accessible to the wider organisation, this has been combined with a reduction in the total number of light vehicles. Where it is not appropriate to use electric vehicles operationally, we seek to procure vehicles that meet the latest emission standards
- target our activities. A heating decarbonisation survey of our 13 highest energy use sites was commissioned and we have been successful in securing £325k of grant funding to implement energy efficiency reductions in two wholetime stations and have applied for further grant funding opportunities.



**We are introducing electric vehicles where practical.**

Our carbon footprint and other metrics, including our greenhouse gas emissions, are published annually at [DSFRS Greenhouse Gas Emissions](#). We have however seen an overall increase in our emissions for 2024 due to the way we report our emissions, which now includes additional indirect emissions.

We have continued with the replacement programme of older light fittings with LEDs with a view that the whole estate will have new lighting in the next five to seven years.

We have completed the construction of three new on-call stations, with improvements against minimum environmental standards, with the inclusion of solar panels, air source heat pumps, and improved thermal performance and control. We continue to progress the review and rationalisation of the property portfolio in conjunction with Service Delivery with two stations currently being reviewed for possible co-location.

We have commenced a significant project looking at the training infrastructure across the estate, in particular the main live fire training facility at the Academy near Exeter Airport, which will bring about significant environmental improvements from the current training practices of hot fire training. An improved training facility with built-in resilience will also enable the Academy to maintain and deliver the mandatory operational training with minimum downtime for repairs and replacements.

### **Looking forward**

Over the next 12-month period, areas for progression and movement towards sustainable delivery are centred around the training strategy, delivery of live-fire training facilities, training hubs, the workshop/ fleet strategy and progression of a sustainable workshop model for the Service. Also, continuation of the electric vehicle charging infrastructure estate-wide.

Our Business Continuity team has been busy testing our plans to ensure that essential services can be delivered during adverse conditions.

## Finance

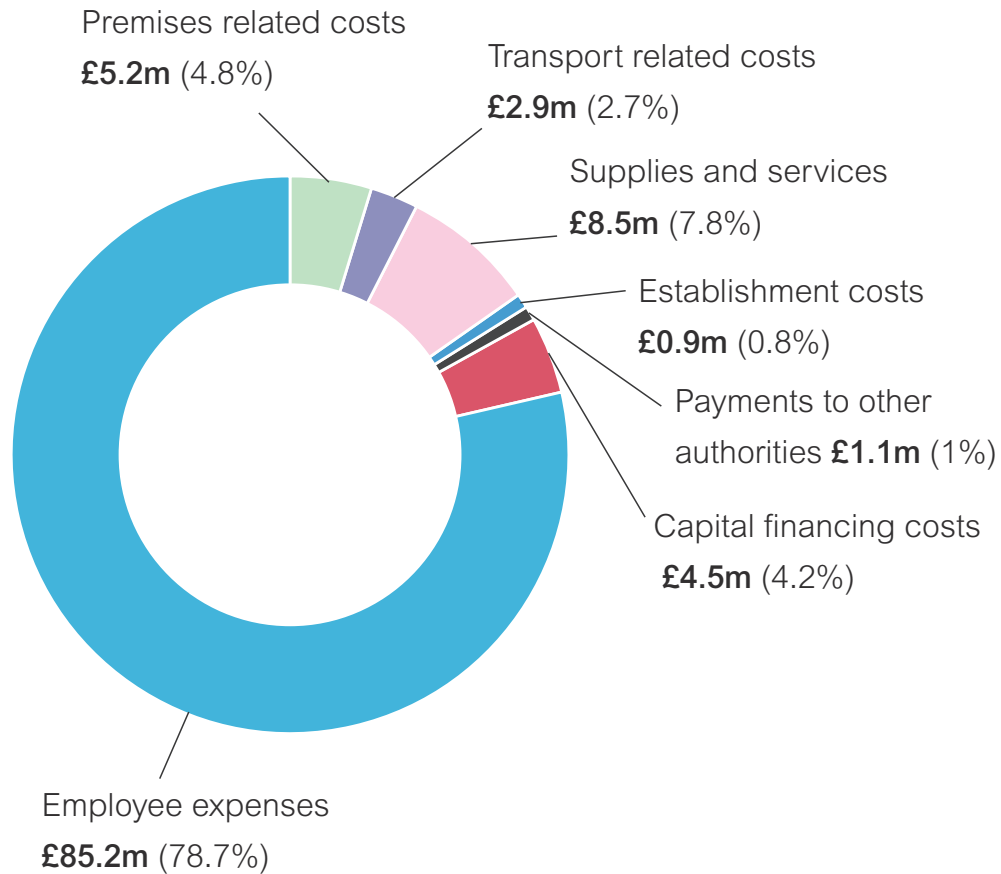
The Authority has an excellent history of achieving savings targets, with over **£23.1m** saved over the years since 2011 - 12 to 2023 - 24. During 2023 - 24, the Service achieved an underspent by **£4.9m**, the majority coming from:

- holding open vacancies within the wholetime service (firefighting) to ensure we are not over-established, following a review of shift-patterns, which is being undertaken. This saved **£1.5m**.
- a quieter year, activity wise saved **£1.0m** in on-call staffing costs
- the professional support staff budget was underspent by **£1.3m** due to delays in recruiting and difficulties attracting the right staff in a competitive market.

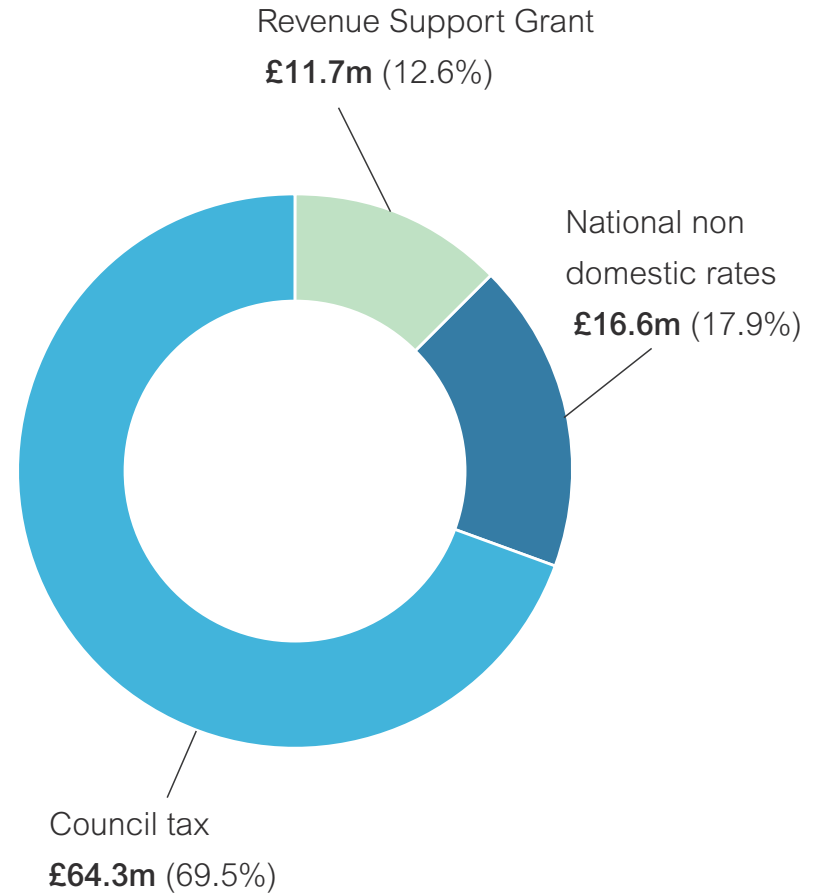
These savings have been reinvested into the Service to increase efficiency and have enabled us to invest in modern fire engines and station rebuilding, without the need to borrow funds.

Our net budget for 2024-25 of **£92.6 million** is funded from a combination of council tax, government grants and a share of the local business rates. Around 69% of our funding comes from council tax for 2024-25 – our B and D precept amount is £99.68.

### Spending 2024/25

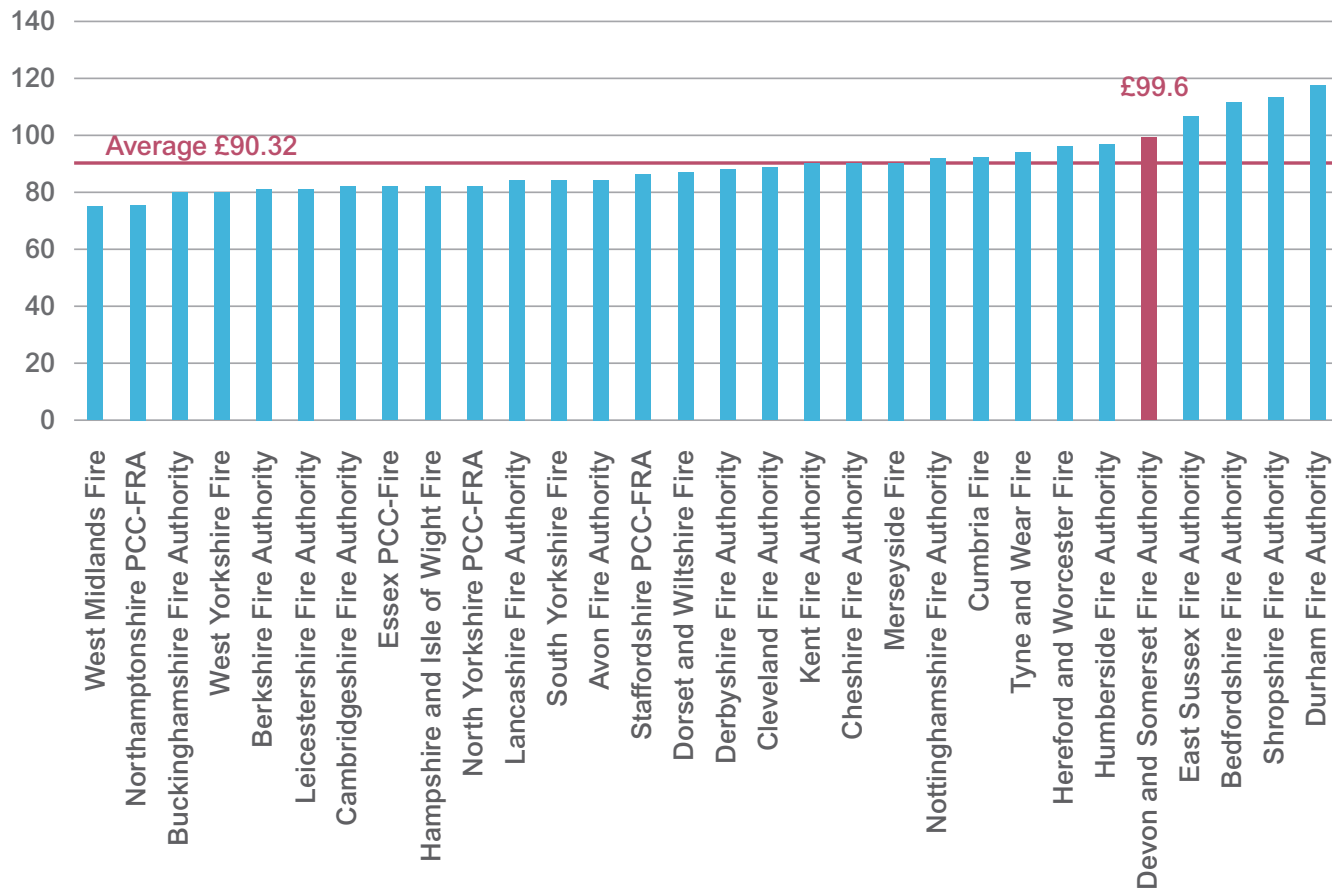


### Funding 2024/25



Our Band D council tax charge is slightly higher than the average charged by English fire and rescue authorities. Our two counties are very rural in places which require a suitable and sufficient operating model to ensure we can match the risk.

### Band D fire precept 2024 - 25



There are also financial reserves which help pay for specific projects, including capital schemes. These are built up from utilising any previous year's budget underspends. Over 60% of our reserves are set aside to fund the capital programme, reducing the requirement to fund using borrowing. The balance will be used to fund initiatives such as the change and improvement programme as agreed by the Fire Authority.

### **Looking forward**

Our medium-term financial planning shows we still have considerable financial challenges ahead if our share of central funding, council tax and business rates does not improve. We forecast a gap of £1.8m for 2025-26 ramping up to £3.9m in 2026-27. Through a review of the shift patterns, payment methods, unnecessary attendance at automatic fire alarms, and reviewing our pre-determined attendance to incidents, coupled with thorough financial management, we are working hard to deal with these challenges so we can deliver on our priorities within this plan.

Our capital investment (building and vehicles) for 2024-25 is £8.1m. This includes spending £4.3m on property and £3.8m on vehicles. New buildings and upgrades will be designed with the environmental and sustainability agenda in mind to match our ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.

More information about our financial planning and performance, including our Productivity and Efficiency statement, can be found through the website within the *'What we spend'* section.

## Technology

Over the past 18 months, the Digital Data and Technology (DDaT) department has been formed, including a new head of department. Building on our commitment to continuous improvement and excellence, the newly formed DDaT department play a crucial role in supporting innovation and modernisation.

We have made investments in creating a scalable cloud-appropriate digital platform, allowing the Service to fulfil the growing demand for data visualisation related to our analysis and business intelligence. It will enable us to quickly use information to support our decision-making and get insight into any future risks that could affect our communities by using cloud technology.

### Looking forward

The Service's new digital and technology strategy will be published at the beginning of 2025 and will be in alignment with the NFCC's Digital Data and Technology (DDaT) function. The strategy will provide a framework for our data collection to support operational response, improve the performance of our services to the community, and promote sustainability.



## Professional standards

Nationally, the Fire Standards Board oversees the identification, organisation, development and maintenance of professional standards for fire and rescue services in England.

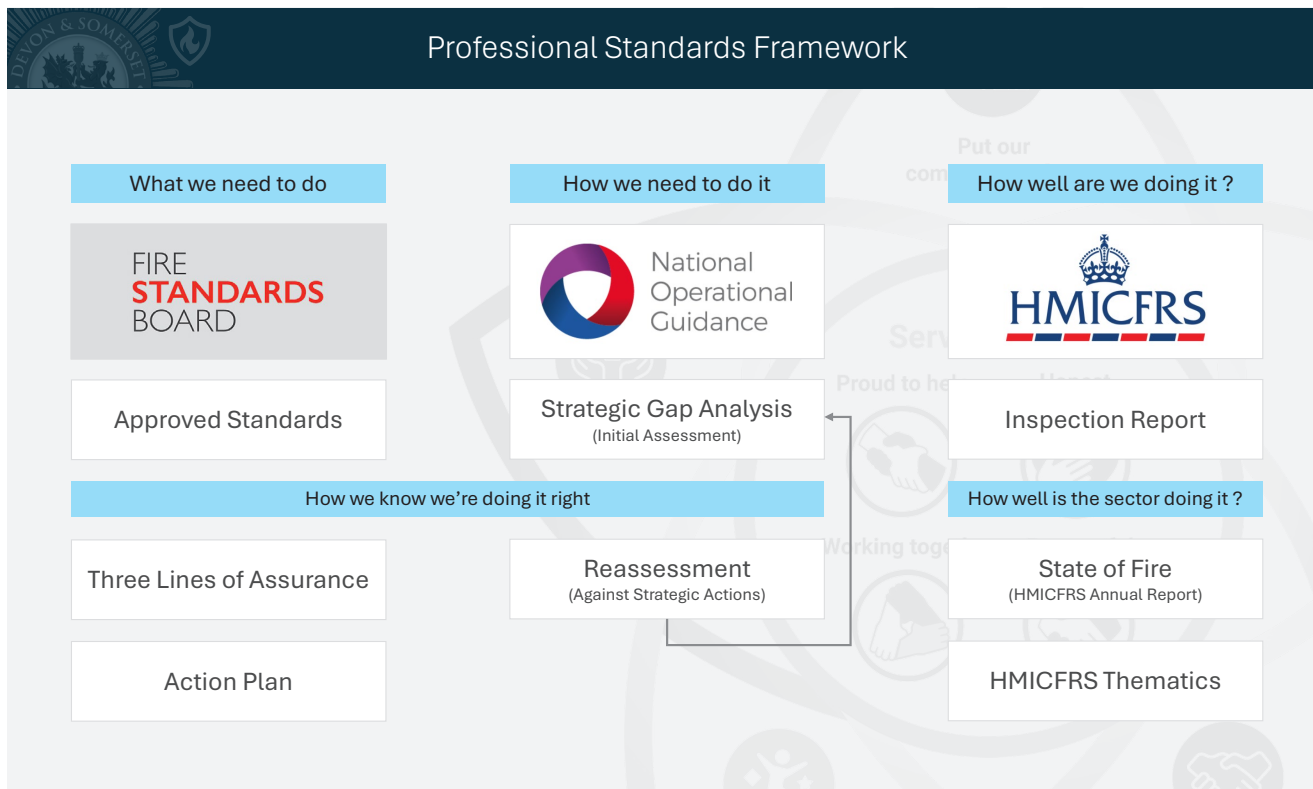
The Fire Standards Board has produced 19 approved Fire Standards, with the latest standards being published in September 2024. In the graphic below you can see how we have aligned these standards to our four strategic priorities.





The Professional Standards function delivers professionalism and standards aligned to our four strategic priorities. This creates clear organisational alignment and delivers against our vision and mission.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service has adopted the sector definition of professional standards as assurance against the Fire Standards as defined by the Fire Standards Board. The professional standards approach promotes alignment of Service outcomes from both local and national inputs including His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection outcomes, HMICFRS national thematic reports and National Operational Guidance.



For more information explaining what the Fire Standards are please use this [link to the NFCC website](#)

Through robust governance processes including a Professional Standards Board, reporting to the Executive Leadership Team and the Fire and Rescue Authority, the approach provides assurance of outcomes over time.

### Looking forward

We are committed to ensuring we fully adopt and align to the Fire Standards. The Service will be focusing on the following areas.

- Delivering outcomes through alignment with national standards and guidance.
- Creating a strategic approach by embedding three lines of assurance.
- Supporting improvement by bringing national recommendations into the Service.





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