

**Working together
for a safer Scotland**



**SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Working together for a safer Scotland

MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT 2020/21

Safety. Teamwork. Respect. Innovation.

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Introduction

Welcome to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) Mid-Year Performance Report for 2020/21.

This report is structured around the ten priorities outlined in the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016 and captures information on some of the key activities that have been carried out to meet these requirements between April and the end of September 2020.

Over the last period the Scottish Government has further prioritised dealing with the most significant challenges facing Scotland. Issues such as meeting the immediate crisis arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, addressing climate change, tackling inequality, driving inclusive economic growth and strengthening partnership working have been central to the policy agenda. We are well placed to support these priorities but in doing so we will face many challenges. Our response will shape the future of the Service, from how it is designed, to the support we provide to communities, and how we will work with our partners.

Throughout 2020 and the pandemic, we have demonstrated our readiness to work with partners and communities to tackle inequality and to respond to local need. We have delivered food parcels and prescriptions and worked with care-experienced young people. Being seen in communities to rise to the challenge of Covid-19 has bound us further to the people of Scotland. The pandemic has tested our ability to innovate, our resilience and our business continuity arrangements, to date we have stood up to the challenge.

Notwithstanding this, many major challenges and new opportunities have arisen from the experience of the pandemic, which have presented us with both organisational and financial consequences.

In Service Delivery we suspended most Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) to reduce the risk of virus transmission between firefighters and members of the public. We continued to visit households most at risk of fire and conducted safe HFSVs for them. These changes resulted in a reduction in the fitting of smoke/fire detection equipment by us over several months. The backlog of visits is being rescheduled for when they are safe to undertake but this will have a knock-on impact on future budgetary requirements for this equipment.

Each year there are thousands of incidents across Scotland which are attributed to fire alarm system actuations. Of these incidents around 97% require no intervention by the SFRS and are recorded as Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS). Throughout the pandemic, we amended the number of fire appliances sent to fire alarm actuations in non-domestic premises. This was to alleviate potential availability pressures on frontline services and to minimise crews mixing with one another and with members of the public. For the same reasons we made temporary amendments to crewing levels on fire appliances across Scotland. These changes in our approach to operational delivery have generated many benefits while safeguarding services to communities. Both approaches remain under regular review.

Covid-19, as in other organisations, has impacted on staff availability. It resulted in increased availability for Retained and Volunteer Firefighters (RVDS) in rural communities, predominantly due

to the impact of the furlough scheme on primary employment. Equally, we saw increased staff absence, consistent with other organisations, with changing patterns evident as infection rates rose and fell across communities. As well as absence, we were faced with firefighter recruitment challenges as we had to suspend non-Covid-secure medical activities; we have now deployed alternatives to those until it's safe to return to normal practices. During this time, we suspended secondments, making use of short-term re-engagements and fast-tracking of trainees to increase our capacity and availability of staff.

The pandemic had considerable impact on operational training. We radically reduced capacity at our training facilities, for social distancing requirements, meaning a commensurate reduction in delivering the required volume of critical training. Combined with the suspension of non-risk critical training, this has resulted in a training backlog.

We have experienced an unprecedented increase in the requirement for cleaning, the supply of appropriate PPE for staff and the requirement to make our premises Covid-19 secure. Initially we also ceased construction work across our estate, but reintroduced it under safe working practices, but with reduced capacity. The combination of both factors has resulted in unplanned financial pressures, construction delays, and cash flow challenges for capital investment.

The pandemic further tested our ICT infrastructure as we had to rapidly adapt to home working for over 1000 members of staff. The learning from this will enable us to further evolve our approach to Agile Working, which supports our aim of being a great place to work. It also enables more innovative and creative ways of working for our staff. We aim to continue to further invest in our digital connectivity and cyber security to support these new ways of working into the future. The pandemic brought into sharp focus, where home working has become more 'normal', the need to support staff to maintain their mental health and wellbeing. Our staff have been provided with a comprehensive package of resources and support, which will be maintained post-pandemic, and it is hoped will help protect our workforce from the as-yet unknown long-term effects of this period.

Overall, Covid-19 has resulted in both savings and additional costs for the Service. In some cases, savings made in 2020/21 will result in additional 'catch-up' costs in 2021/22, for example in addressing the HFSV backlog. It is currently unclear how the second wave of the virus will impact on staff availability and the need to further utilise measures outlined above to maintain resourcing levels. While the sum of these issues was challenging we saw, throughout the pandemic, a remarkably positive commitment among operational and non-operational staff to work with us in bringing these changes about.

We continue to support Scotland's transition to a net zero carbon economy, through partnership working and in leading by example through our high-profile assets in communities across the country. We are driving this agenda through our Climate Change Response Plan 2045; with further financial support we can do more. We are working with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and Scottish Enterprise on a project that will engage business in developing innovative solutions for the yet unresolved decarbonisation challenge of heavy fleet, driving both economic and environmental benefit. Linked to this, our alternative ways of working resulted in financial and carbon savings in relation to travel. While it is unlikely that sustained levels of reduction will be fully achievable post-pandemic, it has provided a clear benchmark against which to measure future activity and has provided a catalyst for longer term sustainable carbon reduction.

Partnership working remains at the core of what we do. We have been working towards developing our broader contribution to public sector outcomes in response to changing national and community risks. To further support this we have been developing a major project around better understanding the changing nature of risk at community levels across the country and what that will mean in terms of future service provision. The Community Risk Index Model (CRIM) is being developed by us to support this and we will begin to see the outputs of this critical piece of work during 2021/22.

We are currently planning for the delayed UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) event to take place in Glasgow in November 2021, co-ordinated through the UK government. To contribute to this major multi-agency event, we will require additional one-off funding during 2021/22, currently estimated at £4.2million.

We are, along with the Scottish Government and blue light partners, a key player in the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP), which will deliver the new Emergency Services Network (ESN) across Great Britain. Despite previous delays, it is currently anticipated that implementation in Scotland will commence mid-2022. Significant planning will be required during the financial year 2021/22 to enable SFRS to play its part in the national roll out. Additionally, one-off funding for non-core costs will be required for the planning and implementation period. For 2021/22, this is currently estimated at £2.6million, rising to £5.3million in 2022/23.

This year illustrated the need for closer collaboration between services in support of our communities. While securing a pay deal for firefighters within a UK-wide context has proven challenging, work remains ongoing to develop the role of the Service as a key collaborative partner, including through the Reform Collaboration Group (RCG). We continue to explore how we can expand Home Fire Safety Visits to provide a broader assessment of safety and wellbeing for vulnerable households. We will also continue to work with the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) in responding to the National Strategy to improve survivability rates for Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrests. We are pleased to have reached an agreement with SAS to provide Clinical Governance for the Service in relation to all medical related work that we undertake when managing incidents. This gives further reassurance to our operational staff that they are equipped, trained and supported to the highest levels. We continue to explore how we can bring about a fully trained and equipped response in the event of a Marauding Terrorist Attack. We estimate that to do so will require further investment of approximately £2.6million in 2021/22 to progress these initiatives.

Similarly, we are actively engaged in working with partners throughout the wider public sector. Increasingly we are sharing premises with our blue light partners and continue to explore innovative ways to provide facilities that meet the needs of communities in the most cost-effective manner. Work has been undertaken to agree the space and design requirements for community fire stations of the future which can be scaled to suit local needs, including multi-agency working. Progressing this will require further investment which, in turn, will generate significant sustainable economic and social benefits at community and national levels.

Notwithstanding positive service developments we will face considerable financial challenges in the years to come. There remains uncertainty within the economy, but it is unlikely that public sector pay will remain static over 2021/22. Alongside the full year impact of previously agreed pay awards; each 1% increase in pay rates will cost us £2.15 million. The SFRS also spends around £75 million per annum (resource and capital) on goods, works and services procured from businesses operating in Scotland, the wider UK and across Europe. Both Covid-19 and the forthcoming EU Exit

are expected to have a significant impact on these businesses. It is currently anticipated that additional trading costs will be passed on, either within contractual terms or simply to maintain supply. Overall, it is anticipated that price increases could add approximately £2.5million to our costs in 2021/22. The accumulated impact of such issues will put further pressure on our resource budget.

As has been highlighted previously, both by us and Audit Scotland, we have a substantial capital backlog investment requirement (£389million in 2017), particularly within our property estate. 61% of community fire stations are over 30 years old, and 52% have been assessed as being in a poor or worse condition. In addition, SFRS identified in 2019 a further urgent issue in relation to an obsolete method of roof construction (Reinforced Aerated Autoclaved Concrete). These roofs remain present in 14 fire stations, and have been identified as a safety risk due to the potential for roof collapse. Short term emergency measures have been put in place, with recurring resource costs. However, the safest and most cost-effective long-term solution in most cases is to rebuild these stations. This would require a total potential investment of approximately £70 million. The CRIM project will support us in ensuring that our assets are deployed in the most effective manner across Scotland, and that our investment in facilities is appropriately targeted, consistent with the Scottish Government's recently published draft Infrastructure Investment Plan. If realised, our plans could form a significant social and economic renewal programme for communities where we have facilities located.

We trust that you find this report both insightful and reassuring regarding our actions to meet the priorities of the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016. We also hope it offers further evidence that, despite the many challenges we have faced this year and will face in future years, we remain committed to improving the wellbeing and safety of the people and communities of Scotland.

Priority 1: Performance Measures



“The SFRS must, in discussion with the Scottish Government, specify appropriate performance measures to support its Strategic Plan, for the delivery of outcomes relating to the strategic priorities and objectives set out in this Framework.”

Following the introduction of a new Strategic Plan (2019-2022) in October 2019, a revised [Performance Management Framework](#) was published in April 2020.

This Framework outlines how we will manage our performance so that we achieve the outcomes and objectives set within the Strategic Plan. The Framework also contains a revised set of corporate performance indicators that are used to monitor performance. From April 2020 our performance reports were amended to update the changes that were made within this document.

To support continual improvement and effective performance management, work began in September 2020 to review the updated Performance Management Framework. Attention will be paid to the measures we have identified and the targets we have set to ensure they remain relevant and current. This will inform decisions and communicate performance against our changing landscape.

A programme of engagement with key stakeholders has been established and a series of key performance questions will be used to inform the further development of our indicators. It is anticipated that the revised Performance Management Framework will be published in April 2021.

Our progress towards the delivery of our Strategic Outcomes and Objectives is also enabled through the development of our Annual Operating Plan which feeds into a Three-year Programme of Work. Introduced last year, the Programme provides a greater oversight of our actions that contribute towards the Strategic Plan and has improved our business and resource planning through increased collaboration and oversight across Directorates.

The flexibility of the new Programme has been of benefit throughout the reporting period. Due to the conflicting resource requirements of Covid-19 and the need to create capacity to support the change agenda for the Service, our Annual Operating Plan 2020/21 has been subject to two reviews throughout the period. This has resulted in a streamlined plan that focuses upon critical business requirements.

Work has continued to strengthen our performance management processes using our new corporate Performance Management System (PMS). The system aims to improve evidence-led decision making, support robust challenge and scrutiny, and evidence SFRS contribution and progress towards organisational and community outcomes.

Performance reporting for both the Annual Operating Plan and our Quarterly Performance are now produced via the PMS and work continues to build an appropriate structure to support the management of risk, Audit and Inspection Action Plans, Local Plans, Directorate Plans and Programme Office projects. This work has been impacted by resource issues created by Covid-19, but it is anticipated that a full-time resource will be recruited towards the end of the calendar year.

Priority 2: Safety, Well-being and Prevention



“The SFRS should fully contribute to improving the safety and well-being of Scotland’s communities and must continue to build on the successful focus on prevention. It should ensure that there is a clear process for working with partners to identify the risks faced by communities and individuals so that the SFRS can target activity on a risk-based approach and where it can most effectively improve safety and contribute to addressing inequalities within and between communities.”

Our role will always be to attend emergency incidents when they occur. However, we also strive to stop these incidents occurring in the first place and, as such, fire prevention sits at the very heart of what we do.

We work closely with our partners to identify risk and target our prevention activity to ensure we can help make Scotland as safe as we can.

Covid-19, and the ensuing lockdown which began in March, brought many unprecedented challenges to our prevention work, impacting Scotland’s risk profile overnight.

With people being urged to stay at home, the potential for more fires in Scottish residential properties increased considerably. The early identification of this risk helped to inform a swift response. We developed and disseminated guidance to empower local areas to take action to meet the needs of their communities by operating within a set of core principles. On a national level the Service developed an engagement strategy which required innovation to counter the unique circumstances of the pandemic.

In recognising the new risks, our aim was to continue to engage with people across Scotland and to prevent an increase in dwelling fires. We relied, as always, on the dedication of our personnel and the support of our partners.

Building on the success of previous community safety initiatives, we ran a targeted engagement campaign focusing on five key areas; cooking, smoking, smoke and heat alarms, electrical safety and establishing a night time routine. Key elements of the campaign included:

- TV, radio, press online and social media advertising
- A downloadable Covid-19 Home Fire Safety Checklist
- Virtual Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV)
- Our ‘5 Quick Questions’ questionnaire
- Our motivated team of personnel who continued to deliver thousands of activities throughout the pandemic

Our fire safety TV advert, developed with partners at STV creative, was seen by 54% of adults in Scotland. 78% of those adults were over 60 – one of our target groups – and 1 million adults saw our advertising via social media and online advertising.

As new trends emerged, we could refocus our community safety messaging in early Autumn. In response to an increase in fire fatalities and serious accidental dwellings fires, we adapted our

messaging to target people over 50 who smoked and who either lived alone, had mobility issues or used medical oxygen. This criterion was based on fire investigation analysis.

The SFRS *Make the Call* campaign launched with a national radio advert and was supported by partner organisations across the community safety sector. *Make the Call* is a hard-hitting appeal to carers, family and friends of those who are at risk of serious injury or even death because of an accidental fire in their home.

The campaign appealed to communities across Scotland to help save a life and consider home fire safety when checking in on vulnerable neighbours, friends and family members during lockdown and to put them in touch with us wherever possible using our free Home Fire Safety Visit phonenumber.

Our staff, who worked at Community hubs engaged with the public throughout the campaign, distributing 109,000 leaflets and 10,000 posters across Scotland. This was followed by a TV, press and social media campaign in October. Our *Make the Call* radio advert reached almost 2 million adults in Scotland, being heard 16.5 million times. The social media campaign reached a combined Scottish audience of over 600,000, whilst the television advert reached 43% of Scottish adults (with 70% of those over 60).

Our *Make the Call* newspaper adverts reached 32% of C2DE adults in Scotland (and 40% of C2DE adults over 50). C2DE is the socio demographic group which is most often at risk from fire, including those who depend on welfare for income, pensioners, and residents in areas of multiple deprivation.

Our Covid-19 Home Fire Safety Checklist was developed to run in conjunction with the TV campaign. As it was deemed unsafe to use traditional methods of delivering leaflets, this downloadable resource was shared widely across websites and social media accounts by ourselves and 60 of our partners – being viewed on social media over 400, 000 times.

Home Fire Safety Visits

Our Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) are a vital tool in our prevention agenda. However, following Scottish Government Covid-19 guidance which was put in place to protect the safety of communities and our staff, all HFSVs, other than those identified as safety critical, such as where there is no detection present, were suspended at the beginning of lockdown, later being made available to those households deemed to be “Very High” and “High” Risk.

In the absence of physical visits, we developed a *Home Fire Safety Questionnaire* - a short questionnaire used by our staff to telephone households across Scotland, helping to cover key fire safety risks. This questionnaire was utilised as part of Scotland-wide activities through which we maintained our engagement with the public. We carried out 7,132 such engagement activities between March and October 2020 and as well as calling households, this saw us fit smoke alarms (when we were able to do so) and carry out post domestic incident responses - where we engage with residents, and share safety messaging, after a local fire.

In the absence of a full programme of HFSVs, we introduced an online *Fire Safety in the Home – Self Assessment*. This allowed anyone who visited the web page to answer a series of questions and then receive personalised fire safety information for their home. The simple assessment could also be carried out on behalf of a neighbour, family member or friend. Following extensive promotion via social media, our online tool had over 6,000 views within the first month of launching.

Since the launch of Covid-19 campaigns and online resources, we have been contacted by other UK Fire and Rescue Services who are interested in using these tools.

Youth Volunteer Scheme

As we moved into Autumn, work began at the end of September to run our seasonal safety campaigns and saw the development of a multi-agency educational package for delivery to schools. As well as utilising our usual channels, this year our Youth Volunteers (YVs) will promote our Firework and Bonfire Safety Campaigns. Our YVs promote preventative messages in schools, as well as the local community to communicate directly to their peers. This group of young people are very much the face of the SFRS, hailed as positive role models in their communities for their volunteering contributions. YVs are actively encouraged to take part in the planning and participation of various events and activities to create positive social change that is of benefit to the wider community, as well as to the young people themselves.

Launched in February 2020, our Youth Volunteer Scheme (YVS) creates opportunities to improve life chances and empower young people. Already we have created ten schemes with a capacity to engage 200 young people and plan to develop a further five with capacity extending to 300 YP. Six schemes are fully established and are currently engaging with the 66 YVs that were welcomed to the SFRS prior to Covid-19. The remaining four will come on line when appropriate under Covid rules.

Since March 2020, the scheme has moved to online engagement. Various lesson plans from the syllabus were created and adapted to allow our volunteers to meet digitally and continue their learning with us. The six 'live' cohorts kept in touch with their volunteers via digital channels to provide some peer and adult support promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. Creative sessions were held with YVs having quizzes online, setting social media challenges, and working in partnership with other national youth organisations to develop learning. The six local schemes designed youth messaging around Covid-19, supporting Scottish Government messages about social distancing, clap for carers and keeping in touch with those feeling isolated.
#YVSTogetherAtHome.

A weekly online chat service was set up to allow YVs and Volunteer Youth Instructors (VYI) to meet with a member of the national team Community Safety Engagement Team to keep updated and connected.

Together with their instructors, YVs were actively involved in developing Phase 2 of the YVS syllabus - responsible citizens. Ensuring inclusivity and that young people are at the centre and paramount to the effective implementation and delivery of the programme. Recruitment processes have concluded for the VYIs who will support the new local schemes to be implemented once face to face activity can begin again. We currently have 30 active VYIs, with a further 42 who will begin their role as new schemes are implemented in other areas.

Crucial to the success of YVS is partnership work with many organisations including Police Scotland, Fearless, Young Scot, YouthLink Scotland, Enable, Army Cadets, RNLI, National Fire Cadets, LGBT Youth Scotland and Save a Life Scotland. The National Community Safety Engagement Team continue to work with partners to further progress the development of YVS.

One project ongoing is exploring a dedicated reward scheme for YVs in partnership with Young Scot.

Smoke detection

Another important prevention tool for the Service is smoke detection within the home.

Following a recent consultation on fire and smoke alarms undertaken by the Scottish Government, the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 will be amended to reflect a new level of requirement for these vital pieces of equipment. The amended standard, was due to come into effect in February 2021 but, given the impact of Covid-19, the Scottish Government have proposed moving the implementation date to 2022. The new standard will cover all homes, with the existing standard required in private rented housing to be extended to all tenures of housing.

Work has begun to plan for the new standard, with the Scottish Government providing £678,956 in the 2019/20 financial year to purchase interlinked smoke and heat alarms, and carbon monoxide detectors. A further £38,685 has been spent in 2020/21 on alarms, with significant funding also provided to purchased ladders to facilitate the installation of the new equipment.

A Safe System of Work has been developed to ensure safe methods and procedures are followed when staff are fitting the new standard. Additionally, a suite of documents to guide staff through the technical and procedural aspects of fitting is now available, as is a bespoke training package.

The detectors procured will enable SFRS to fit to the new standard of detection in all 'High Risk', owner-occupied properties. The roll-out programme to fit the new standard of detection will begin in Autumn 2020. A second phase roll-out will then take place between November 2020 and January 2021.

Remote Auditing for Regulatory Compliance

As well as providing safety advice to householders and members of the public, we have a duty to regulate non-domestic buildings in terms of fire safety in accordance with Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005. This work is delivered through a risk based inspection program incorporated within our Fire Safety Enforcement Policy Framework.

The challenges presented by Covid-19 have led to reduced engagement between April and September. On-site audits presented a risk to our officers and the community through potential transmission of the virus and, as such, were limited. Additionally, many difficulties existed within premises, depending on the nature of that business, in introducing Covid-related protective measures as some had potential to conflict with day-to-day fire safety measures within buildings. Reductions in staff numbers due to sickness or isolation, particularly in the care sector, could also affect abilities to manage evacuations should a fire occur.

Recognising these challenges and engaging with local Fire Safety Enforcement (FSE) teams, a working group was established to consider the introduction of virtual and/or telephone audits. Following a pilot process, a Remote Auditing Procedure, incorporating best practice and lessons learned, was launched. This allowed continued engagement with dutyholders to manage fire risks,

and support the prioritisation of any risk critical premises that would require further enforcement intervention.

The policy is now well established and can be flexibly applied where restrictions prevent our FSE teams from entering premises unnecessarily and supports FSE work across the more remote areas of Scotland to ensure fire risk within our communities is managed in line with the priorities set out within our framework.

Whilst the ability to undertake audits has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, there is now a process in place to ensure that fire risk within our communities continues to be managed in line with the priorities set out within our framework.

SPOTLIGHT: EXPANDING OUR FIRE INVESTIGATION TEAM

This year, the Fire Investigation Section (FI) expanded their team by welcoming a Fire Investigation Dog Team (FIDT). This new resource supports our FI teams and improves our capabilities and performance.

A specially trained canine called Phoenix and his handler are now nationally available to support FI teams at fire scenes where it is suspected that ignitable liquids may have been used as an accelerant.

The benefits of a trained fire investigation canine asset are recognised across the fire investigation sector and we are one of the few fire and rescue services in the UK to have such an asset at our disposal.

Phoenix and his handler have demonstrated that they are more efficient and effective at detecting the presence of ignitable liquids in complex fire scenes than specialist equipment or the nose of a human fire investigator.

The FIDT provides the capability to ensure that a comprehensive fire scene investigation is undertaken. This enhanced capability supports safeguarding of our investigative processes by detecting key supporting evidence that may be crucial to the investigation and form part of the final Fire Investigation Report. The evidence documented within the report is shared with partners in Police Scotland and the Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service, and can be used as evidence where an SFRS Fire Investigation report is part of criminal justice proceedings.

The FIDT can also be utilised for community safety engagement, providing both a proactive and reactive role. The FIDT can be requested to support our Community Action Teams when they are engaging with individuals or groups discussing anti-social behaviour or wilful fire-raising activities. The FIDT can also provide trauma support for victims of fire. Phoenix is trained to interact and, where appropriate, will offer comfort and support for individuals or families who may have suffered injury or loss at a fire-related event.

FI management are continuing to develop the FIDT capability and plans to further improve performance and resilience are currently being explored.

Priority 3: Response and Resilience



“The SFRS should work with other public-sector partners to evolve a holistic and dynamic process of identification, evaluation and assessment of community risk and Best Value in order to prioritise and target its use of resources to ensure an appropriate response to incidents across Scotland and support improved outcomes for communities. As part of this approach, the SFRS should promote optimal command, control, communication and tri-service co-operation in response to incidents.”

Working alongside our partners to develop an appropriate response to incidents is a crucial element of our role and you will see many examples of this type of working throughout this entire document.

Partnership working has featured heavily in the creation of our Wildfire Concept of Operations. Wildfires have a devastating impact upon the countryside. They destroy natural habitats for wildlife as well as releasing large quantities of carbon into the atmosphere from the smoke they produce where peatlands are involved. We are developing a Concept of Operations that focuses on the need to prevent these fires from happening, and ensuring that when they do, the response is as efficient and effective as possible.

During the reporting period, a multi-departmental Wildfire Implementation Group has been established and initial actions given to all members. Research work has been undertaken to identify and procure suitable PPE for a Wildfire response that can also be used at multiple incident types. Additionally, initial work has been carried out to identify what capacity already exists within the SFRS fleet to reduce the need to purchase equipment and vehicles to support Wildfire response.

The development and delivery of the necessary training for wildfire response in accordance with the National Fire Chiefs Council Framework for response stations is currently on hold due to Covid-19. However, it is being reviewed with a view to carrying out any necessary preparatory work.

We continue to chair the Scottish Wildfire Forum, this multi-agency group has developed a strategy that seeks to reduce the instance of wildfires by promoting good practice, providing education and information and developing a shared understanding across all relevant sectors for wildfire. A significant part of this work has been the assistance provided to Scottish Government to develop the Scottish National Risk Assessment for Wildfires which will appear in Scotland’s Risk Preparedness Assessment.

We are also participating in an exciting EU Project called HEIMDALL. This innovative project combines Earth observation and ground sensor data to allow for predictions on where and when wildfires might occur. It provides a common information sharing platform for all response agencies to access and share real time data, and allows for a variety of response tactics to be trialled virtually so that the most effective option can be selected for deployment in real time.

Command and Control Futures (CCF) Project

To strengthen resilience and provide the SFRS with a single state-of-the-art, reliable and effective system to dispatch our resources, we are in the process of implementing our new Command and Control Mobilising System.

The transition, ratification and management of data from legacy systems to the new Command and Control Mobilising System continues to be actively managed.

Whilst progressing the delivery timeline (as updated/agreed in September 2019), the impact of Covid-19 mitigation measures and additional workload has been monitored, addressed and managed as far as practical. Areas including supply, installation, development, testing and training have all been subject to some impact.

As we moved into a recovery phase from the initial wave of Covid-19, a further review of the total and ongoing impact on the CCF Project was completed and reported through the designated governance route, giving rise to a further review of project deliverables and the go-live timeline. Following the agreement of this by the CCF Board, and our Strategic Leadership Team the new timeline following the Covid-19 impact assessment is a phased go-live at the three Operations Control Sites between May and September 2021.

As always, close monitoring and review of existing system provision continues to be conducted to be sure that any potential delay in implementation does not jeopardise SFRS resilience to receive and handle emergency calls and to mobilise suitable and appropriate resources to emergency incidents”.

The Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP)

We continue to be involved in the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP). The ESMCP was established by the Home Office to manage the replacement of the current Airwave Tetra Communications network used by the UK’s emergency services.

The Programme has gone through a significant review in the last two years, resulting in a revised plan and, a yet to be completed, business case. Timescale for implementation of the Emergency Services Network (ESN) is now clearer and likely to commence in mid-2022 through to the end of 2023.

To ensure that we are appropriately sighted and prepared for this complex migration, robust governance arrangements and a number of working groups have been established. We work closely with emergency service partners and Scottish Government to ensure the eventual implementation of the Emergency Services Network is fit for purpose. An internal Programme Board has been established and the project has been approved to be treated as a major project within the remit of the Major projects portfolio.

SPOTLIGHT: OPERATIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ACTION

Our Operational Intelligence Unit has worked through challenging circumstances to completely update the Service's intelligence on Glasgow's Scottish Event Campus (SEC), following its temporary reassignment as the NHS Louisa Jordan hospital.

Colleagues worked through challenges such as remote home working, no access to the site and continuing changes to the proposed layout and contents along with the hospital's opening being brought forward – all of which provided both logistical and management hurdles.

However, the team could draw upon work already undertaken for the UN Climate Change Conference that is due to be held in the venue in November 2021. Through working with our partners and stakeholders they were able to merge all completed work into a 'master plan' of the area and create a 3D Fire Service Response Plan (FSRP) containing all risk critical information to supply to front line crews.

This vital piece of work helped us ensure that we could respond quickly and effectively to any incident at the NHS Louisa Jordan.

Their work was to be used when, prior to the official opening of NHS Louisa Jordan, Yorkhill Community Fire Station Red Watch and colleagues from Johnstone Operations Control worked alongside NHS partners to carry out a training exercise based on a fire within the high dependency unit of the Louisa Jordan hospital in Glasgow. This also allowed testing of both SFRS and NHS procedures as well as communications between both agencies and Operations Control.

The exercise ran well with crews demonstrating their expertise in both firefighting and in the correct procedures associated with a Covid-19 risk, including decontamination procedures. The SFRS Task Cards (procedural guides) were utilised to ensure this process was carried out correctly and that all infection risks were managed effectively. Once complete at the end of the scenario, a multi-agency debrief was held and learning points were submitted to the Operational Assurance team. The event provided a great opportunity to run a realistic exercise, in conjunction with our partners, to ensure that our planning and preparation has been effective, which the successful exercise proved.

Priority 4: Response and Resilience



“The SFRS should support effective multi-agency emergency planning and response arrangements including contributing fully to the work of Regional and Local Resilience Partnerships in assessing risk; and preparing, planning for, responding to and recovering from major catastrophic incidents and threats. When working with other responders, the SFRS should play a key role in building community resilience and protecting both Scottish and UK critical infrastructure assets.”

Maintaining service delivery during Covid-19: Early Stages

Our main purpose is to work in partnership with communities and with others in the public, private and third sectors on prevention, protection and response to improve the safety and wellbeing of people throughout Scotland.

To effectively support this strategy during the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic, three main governance routes were established, all of which fed into the SFRS Gold Group (our Strategic Leadership Team):

- **Covid-19 Tactical Action Group (COTAG)** – aimed to ensure that we continued to operate efficiently and effectively, whilst maintaining a high standard of service delivery through effective business continuity planning. This work included ensuring that all areas of the Service were prepared and equipped to maintain service delivery safely, in challenging conditions that have been presented by Covid-19.
- **Forward Planning and Recovery Group** - established to consider recovery methodology and a structure to support and aid SFRS to return to a new normality. It was recognised that through the working and learning developed by this group there is an opportunity to review and, where necessary, improve current processes to maintain the delivery of services in an efficient and effective manner; ultimately assisting the organisation to continuously improve.
- **Health and Welfare Group** – established to develop and provide resources and tools to safeguard the health and welfare of our staff.

Navigating Covid-19: Our Current Approach

From the 25 May 2020, the Senior Management Board was confirmed as the primary method of ensuring robust strategic oversight and decision making to support our response to and recovery from Covid-19. The Board, known as COSMB, resumed responsibility to build upon the initial work delivered by the COTAG.

COSMB has acted as the strategic SFRS group responsible for overseeing and coordinating all activity related to Reset and Renew arrangements associated with Covid-19. The group has continued to ensure our values are adhered to and are evident in its decision making.

Both the COTAG and COSMB, have been supported by our COP26 Team. The team, which was originally established to oversee a number of national events that were due to take place throughout

2020/21, were repurposed in part as the CoTeam. This new direction saw the team support Covid-19 response management arrangements, with particular focus on protecting frontline services and supporting firefighter safety.

CoTeam were heavily involved in the preparation and promotion of the processes that have been developed to ensure that our operational staff can still safely protect the communities of Scotland.

In June 2020, the underpinning General Information Note, *Pandemic Station and Operations Control Standards*, which provides a framework for all Local Senior Officer and Operations Control management teams and frontline personnel to consider the necessary steps to enhance safety during a pandemic, was issued. This document has the overarching aim of supporting and encouraging personnel to remain safe within their workplace by promoting positive behaviours and culture. This document has continued to be reviewed and developed in line with Scotland's changing operating environment.

A further 24 Task Cards have also been produced, each providing step-by-step guides to be followed to carry out operational tasks safely.

The Team has also helped to prepare the daily and weekly Covid reports that are shared with our Strategic Leadership Team and Scottish Government to monitor our progress against Covid-19 related workstreams, appliance availability figures, and numbers of confirmed Covid-19 cases within the Service.

In October 2020, as Scotland moves into the second wave of Covid-19, the COTAG was re-established ensuring robust strategic oversight and decision making to support our response to and recovery from Covid-19.

Reset and Renew Roadmap

It is recognised at a national, international and global level that Covid-19 is likely to remain part of our way of life for a considerable period. Therefore, many of the changes and new processes that have been implemented in response to Covid-19 may require to be maintained for the foreseeable future and perhaps even permanently.

At some point the pandemic will be over and life will return to a more normal posture. However, it may not be possible or appropriate to return to how things were prior to the pandemic. The SFRS is still very much in the response phase and remains focused on responding to the challenges of Covid-19; however, at the same time we recognise that a reset and renew phase is an important element of the overall process.

In July 2020, the routemap for navigating Covid-19 and delivery of the associated Reset and Renew Agenda was approved by our Strategic Leadership Team. The Routemap was developed around the SFRS organisational values of Safety, Teamwork, Respect and Innovation and underpinned by the SFRS Covid-19 Operating Principles of Safe, Person Centred, Evidence Based and Clearly Communicated. The SFRS Routemap is also strongly aligned with the strategy and guidance provided by Scottish Government and specifically the Covid-19 Framework for Decision Making.

In addition to the organisational values and operating principles, we identified eight primary themes where the various Covid-19 objectives will rest.

- People
- Workplace
- Operational Strategy
- Governance and Compliance
- Technology
- Leadership
- Partnership Working
- Communications and Engagement
- Finance

In support of the primary themes, a suite of supporting themes has also been developed. These themes, which will be continually reviewed, will serve as a filter to examine the impact across the organisation as each new continuous improvement objective is developed.

Communicating our Covid-19 approach

It was crucial that our approach to managing Covid-19 was shared with our staff. Our Communications and Engagement Team have reprioritised all work during the period to ensure that staff received clear, concise and timely information regarding the impact of Covid-19 at work.

Two communications strategies were developed – one to support the tactical response and the other to support the reset, renew and recovery work in terms of how SFRS will respond in the longer term to the lessons learned through the pandemic.

As a result, the team introduced regular Covid briefings and managers briefings, a dedicated Covid section on iHub, and Sharepoint so that all staff could access relevant information without the need to be in SFRS premises. Regular Skype Q&A sessions were broadcast by the Chief Officer.

Significant work was undertaken to support the Covid-secure status of buildings and communicate the role and responsibilities of staff in ensuring they take the appropriate action to mitigate any spread of infection. This included developing posters, videos and information booklets, as well as reinforcing messaging through staff briefing emails.

The function also conducted a series of workshops with staff to capture their experiences of Covid-19 and a report was completed to help inform the workstreams identified through reset and renew.

An SFRS Employees Facebook group was established as well as employee networks with virtual groups of colleagues from across the Service to help staff keep in touch.

SPOTLIGHT: HELPING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Staff across the country have been praised for upkeeping our Service tradition of showing how innovative we can be in adapting to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in society during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our amazing staff have undoubtedly been a vital lifeline to many and went above and beyond the call of duty during lockdown to help their communities.

Colleagues in Lanarkshire launched a series of initiatives to help the elderly and vulnerable during Covid-19. Members of the South Lanarkshire Community Action Team, along with two colleagues from Clydesmill Fire Station, worked closely with South Lanarkshire Council's Community Wellbeing team in delivering prescriptions. The partnership reached out to 250 voluntary groups, including elderly person's charity LEAP.

Prescriptions have also been delivered across Renfrewshire and Midlothian, and as far afield as Orkney. As well as food and prescription deliveries, Ayrshire's Community Action Team also provided support for the elderly and vulnerable through vital befriending calls.

Members of the East Administration team helped regions within the East Service Delivery Area with keeping the Community Safety Engagement Toolkit up to date and supporting those in most need to stay safe by sending out reminder letters for Home Fire Safety Visits.

Blairgowrie Community Fire Station and crews at Port Glasgow both worked in partnership with their local Tesco to generously provide more than three full shopping trollies worth of essential items to Perth and Kinross Foodbank and donated shopping vouchers to a local voluntary group, respectively, to assist those struggling. Group Commander (GC) David Girrity (Edinburgh City) and his wife Jennifer prepared and cooked an incredible 120 meals in 8 hours for the Eyemouth Responders Team.

Stirling firefighters were delighted to team up with Doune's Deanston Distillery, who had diversified, to help deliver dozens of cases of hand sanitiser to care homes throughout Stirling and Clackmannanshire. Renfrew Community Fire Safety team collected essential toiletries for patients and medical staff. Perth firefighters raised money to organise a rainbow 'Thank You NHS' flag to fly above the station and continued fundraising was donated to Tayside health fund.

GC Scott Gibson, who is also a football coach for an under-14 female team, helped to inspire young athletes to keep fighting fit with weekly social media challenges, including keepie-ups with a toilet roll. These challenges helped keep the team active and engaged during lockdown.

GC Tommy Keay joined an innovative project led by Dumfries and Galloway Libraries to keep children entertained over lockdown by reading interesting and educational tales to them over Facebook. GC Keay's recital of Frances the Firefly, a story that includes important fire safety messaging for young people was watched by more than 400 children and families.

Watch Commander Danielle MacGillivray, from the Western Isles called upon a team of young stars, including her son, to help create a fun and informative video on how families can stay safe at home. Each were set a task of simple safety measures such as testing smoke alarms, ensuring candles are fully extinguished, switching off plugs, and making sure doors within the home are

closed. These compiled into a brilliant video highlighting some key fire safety advice. Similarly, retired Firefighter Amy Gerrard (Lerwick) created fire safety home education packs, for children of all ages.

Our tremendous efforts over these unprecedented and undoubtedly difficult times for everyone have not gone unnoticed, receiving much positive political reaction. MSPs and MPs from across the political spectrum have engaged with us through email, post, sharing or retweeting on social media and 14 motions have been lodged and supported in the Scottish Parliament.

All politicians wished to thank and congratulate us in general or as a station, crew, group or individual for doing or achieving something exceptional – and making a difference. Significantly we were recognised as a humanitarian organisation providing vital assistance to the most vulnerable in society, particularly during the pandemic.

Priority 5: Partnership



“Community planning and partnership working with other services and communities should be embedded throughout the SFRS. Building on its existing Engagement Strategy, the SFRS should proactively seek collaborative opportunities and innovative ways of working in partnership with other blue light services/key stakeholders to improve outcomes for communities and should ensure effective stakeholder engagement in its approach to all its work including partnership working.”

Teamwork is one of our core values and we acknowledge the wide-ranging benefits partnership working can bring. Many partnerships are now fully embedded and span a full range of services.

Working with our emergency service partners

The Reform Collaboration Group (RCG), comprises both the Chairs and Chief Officers of all three emergency services, meets 6-monthly. The RCG Officers Support Group, comprising of Directors/senior managers meets quarterly to ensure progress is being made on agreed projects.

To support delivery of these projects a Programme Office style approach has been adopted. This will ensure reporting of projects is consistent across the services and will provide the RCG with a clearer understanding of development and progress.

Nine areas of collaboration have been identified to take forward. Some of these projects are new and are still at a developmental stage, whilst others are more established. A list of the projects is noted below:

- **Emergency Service Network** – the Emergency Service Network Programme Board was established to manage the changeover to a new emergency communications network. The revised full Business Case for the UK wide Programme, expected by the end of 2019, has been delayed further due to Covid. A revised high level Integrated Programme Plan was released in March 2020 indicating the three Scottish Emergency Services would transition to the new network between 2022 and 2024.
- **Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest** – this project has been in a joint research and development phase for some months.
- **Staff wellbeing** – There is a much stronger commitment to safeguard the mental health and wellbeing of staff. This is evidenced by the preparation of mental health strategies across the three services. In support of those strategies the Lifelines project will explore how we can work together to improve the provision of mental health resources for staff.
- **Tri-Service Community Safety Officer Posts** – the aim of this project, will be to combine all aspects of the three emergency services and the Local Authority community safety and resilience work for one jointly employed individual to deliver on behalf of the partners. The intention is to improve efficiency and effectiveness of all three emergency services and the local authority in remote rural areas accordingly.

- **Mental Health Response** – this project will seek to scope out how services can reduce the emergency demand of and better support individuals with mental health problems.
- **Demand and Capacity** – the 3 Services are exploring their future demand and capacity challenges and have agreed to share information on their respective methodologies and modelling systems. By working together, the RCG intend to jointly develop our understanding of changing community risk and its impact on demand pressures and the subsequent relationship between Service demand and resource requirements.
- **Leadership Development** – this project seeks to identify and deliver areas of collaborative leadership development. Areas being explored include the development of a shared competency framework and joint leadership and command training.
- **Emergency Services Gazetteer** – delivery of this project is highly dependent on securing adequate project management resources. Confirmation of funding is awaited from Scottish Government.
- **Joint Asset Sharing** – this project has been established for a number of years and managed by a Joint Assets Sharing Group to develop a systematic approach to considering opportunities for station co-location.

Currently there are 834 stations operated by the Emergency Services (356 SFRS, 349 Police Scotland, and 129 SAS). There are now 31 locations where at least two of the three emergency services share indoor space, with the most recent seeing Kirkcudbright Fire Station welcome members of Police Scotland following decommissioning of the Police Station.

There are several further locations which are used as tactical deployment points, where for example an ambulance can be mobilised from a fire station. Some of these, and other locations, are also shared with other partners e.g. Councils, the DVLA, or the Coastguard Agency.

In addition to exploring shared property opportunities, we are also exploring how we may work together on a joint Electric Vehicle Infrastructure and shared workshops. We have a joint Automatic Vehicle Location System contract agreed and are working towards a contract for consumable spares.

Working Together Framework

We remain committed to maintaining harmonious employee relations in accordance with the SFRS Working Together Framework. Regular engagement continues to take place with the trade unions, across all Directorates and Service Delivery areas at both a strategic and a local level and appropriate escalation routes established should this be necessary.

Engagement has commenced with all trade union partners regarding a review of the Working Together Framework to ensure it remains fit for purpose and continues to support effective partnership working to meet the current and future needs of the Service.

SPOTLIGHT: PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO PROTECT THE MOST VULNERABLE

In June 2020, we joined with Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland to help tackle isolation and keep the vulnerable safe. Through the partnership, staff across the country will identify people in the community who could benefit from the Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland's Kindness Project during Home Fire Safety Visits.

The charity which has over 5,000 volunteers is supporting people through regular phone calls, collection of medication or shopping and dog walking.

Through our community safety work, we are routinely engaging with communities across Scotland and we want to identify and support those most at risk of fire. This includes individuals with underlying health conditions, people living alone, and people in receipt of services from other partners. These are individuals and households that would also benefit from the services of the Kindness Project and it is an ideal opportunity for us to link up and provide support during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond.

In return, the Kindness Volunteers can help share our important fire safety messages and help us to reach those most at risk who may benefit from a Home Fire Safety Visit.

Priority 6: Service Transformation



“The SFRS should continue to ensure that the benefits of Fire Reform are fully realised, evidenced and tracked, and it should explore through Service redesign new and innovative ways in which it can improve the safety and well-being of communities throughout Scotland by building on the traditional roles carried out by the Service.”

SFRS Long-Term Vision

The pandemic has undoubtedly changed the way that we need to work. As a Service we are experiencing intense organisational change pressures. However, these pressures do not just come from Covid-19. Some of them, like the consequences of climate change or the changing risk profile of our communities, have been developing for some time.

We face a highly volatile and uncertain operating environment through which we must plot our course of action to ensure the services we provide continue to evolve to meet these and other challenges as they emerge. To do this, we have begun work to develop a long-term vision for the Service.

Our Long-Term Vision will clearly articulate the purpose of the Service and provide a guide for our staff on where we are going and, critically, why we think we need to go there. It will establish the breadth of our ambitions and the timescale over which we expect to realise them.

To develop our Vision, we plan to fully, openly and honestly engage with staff. This will help us to build a shared understanding of the issues and pressures we are facing and will enable our staff to shape our Vision in partnership with senior management and our Board, leading to wider ownership of the changes we seek to bring about.

Our engagement process began at the end of September when three virtual events, led by the Chief Officer, were held for senior managers. In October and November, a Service-wide online survey will be made available to all staff allowing us to gather quantitative data to supplement the views gathered in workshops. A communications toolkit for managers has been developed to support local conversations in team meetings. The outputs of these local discussions will be conveyed to corporate communications to capture as part of our dialogues with staff.

We also plan to utilise discussion forums, a dedicated email address for questions and live Q&A sessions hosted by members of our Strategic Leadership Team. The focus and themes for these Q&A sessions will be drawn from the themes and issues that arise in workshops. This will enable us to communicate these issues to a wider group of staff and simultaneously demonstrate how we are listening to staff and responding to the points they are raising to us in the engagement process to build the long-term vision.

It is anticipated that additional engagement will then be undertaken with key external stakeholders such as emergency service partners, local authorities, health and social care partners. A mutually supportive political engagement process will also be implemented to help with external engagement on the emerging long-term vision. This will enable us to engage across government and the wider

political spectrum in discussing our long-term vision and in building support for it among key political actors.

It is anticipated that our Future Vision will be published in Spring 2021.

Cultural Framework

In support of Future Vision development and planning, a draft Cultural Framework concept (the Building the Future Together (BFT) Programme) has been developed and was approved by the Strategic Leadership Team in September 2020. Initial work has commenced to establish a Programme Board and appropriate workstreams to deliver the Framework and realise the associated benefits.

The programme includes 5 key workstreams:

- Staff Governance Charter
- Leadership Style
- Staff Survey (Engagement) and Performance Monitoring
- Workforce
- Values and Behaviours

The implementation and embedding of the Building the Future Together Programme will create the environment and conditions to support our workforce to think innovatively, empower our leaders, build on our skills, competencies and behaviours and enable a service that is fit for the future. All of this will be built on a strong foundation of clear structures, systems and processes to ensure that our organisational infrastructure can support the future direction of travel.

Delivering change

A review of organisational structures, combined with the recognition of the scale of existing change and the future change ambition within SFRS, resulted in the creation of a new Directorate within the Service.

The Service Development Directorate was formed in March 2020 with the overarching purpose of providing the bridge between strategy and implementation, through the coordination of activity and delivery of access to a full suite of change management, change delivery and service improvement capabilities, all within a single location.

The Service Development Directorate consists of the SFRS Portfolio Office, Service Improvement, Service Delivery Model Programme, and Information, Communications and Technology functions.

The structure and operation of the new directorate will continually adapt, flex and ultimately improve to meet the very dynamic needs of managing and delivering change in Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) environments, where both the public and private sectors and organisations now routinely have to operate.

SFRS Portfolio Office

Our existing major change projects that support the delivery of our change ambitions and Strategic Plan 2019-22 are managed through a Portfolio Office approach. Originally managed through a Programme Office, a Gateway Review was carried out earlier this year by the Scottish Government Programme and Project Management Centre of Expertise which identified and recommended that we were able to move to a Portfolio structure rather than a Programme structure in carrying out our change activities.

In support of this change, all of the necessary updates to templates, titles and supporting documentation have been delivered by the Portfolio Office team. A portfolio approach has a number of benefits for the Service. The approach better reflects the work undertaken by the team; meets the requirements of the Gateway Review; simplifies the governance routes; and reduces confusion between Programme Office and Programme Boards.

The Portfolio Office provides governance and support to a range of projects under three programmes of work. These Projects, including those that fall under Service Transformation, are listed in the table below:

Programme	Project
Transformation	Safe and Well
Transformation	Mass Casualty Events
Transformation	Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest
Transformation	Terms and Conditions
Transformation	Youth Volunteer Scheme
Service Delivery Model	Community Risk Impact Model
Service Delivery Model	Demand Based Watch Duty System
Service Delivery Model	Station/ Appliance Review
Service Delivery Model	RVDS Strategy
Major Projects	Command and Control Phase 2
Major Projects	Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme
Major Projects	McDonald Road Redevelopment and Museum of Fire
Major Projects	People, Training, Finance and Asset Management System
Major Projects	West Asset Resource Centre

Priority 7: Modernising Response



“The SFRS should develop and implement dynamic, innovative and sustainable operating systems throughout Scotland which are fit for purpose and meet local needs (covering both the Retained Duty System and whole-time firefighter work patterns).”

The Service Delivery Model Programme (SDMP) was formed in April 2019 with the overall aim to undertake short, medium and long-term scenario planning, to inform an analysis of risk across Scotland’s communities. These reviews will identify where the SFRS, working within the confines of the resources available and in partnership, can deliver a balanced prevention, protection and response model that will contribute to eliminating, reducing or mitigating known or predicted community risk.

The Programme consists of four distinct but interrelated projects:

- **Community Risk Index Model (CRIM)** – this is the development of a capability to provide an accurate and dynamic assessment of known and predicted risk across the country, within the fire and rescue service operating context. This will ensure that we can continue to deliver our statutory duties as specified within the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 whilst, at the same time, recognising the strategic ambition of our Strategic Plan 2019–2022 and remaining relevant to the communities we serve.
- **Station and Appliance Review** – using the outcomes of the CRIM, a review of current stations and appliances is being undertaken. Our current station locations will be overlaid with the outcomes of the risk review to determine if these assets are in the best locations to meet the known or anticipated risks, whilst at the same time being utilised to their maximum benefit in an effective and efficient manner within their respective operating contexts.
- **RDS/VDS Strategy** – the creation of an overarching strategy to identify initiatives and improvements that can be implemented to further support and strengthen the Retained and Volunteer Duty Systems. The strategy is focused on, but not limited to, the overarching themes of recruitment, retention and response and is an essential component in supporting a critical and valued element of our service delivery model.
- **Demand Based Duty Systems** – within our community fire stations a constant crewing level is currently applied across the full 24-hour period of every day, despite the operational demand placed on each station varying across the same time period. This project is profiling operational demand and is seeking to identify where there may be opportunities to apply alternative solutions to current crewing models. In the simplest of terms that means having more firefighters available during busy periods and less during quieter periods, whilst at the same time ensuring there is sufficient resilience within the system to be able to safely respond to unexpected large scale, protracted or spate incidents. This would allow us to redeploy any additional capacity realised to undertake operational training, support community safety activity or other activities associated with maintaining and effective and safe operational capability.

Phase 1 of the programme concluded in December 2019 and identified a total of 30 areas for consideration to be taken forward into Phase 2. Of these 30 areas, 11 were associated with the Station and Appliance Review and Demand Based Duty System Projects and 19 were associated with the RDS/VDS Strategy.

Phase 2 of the programme is well underway and will seek to deliver an initial scope of potential change for December 2020. This will be supported and further refined with more detailed analysis scheduled to be provided for June 2021. On conclusion of Phase 2, the programme will move into Phase 3 (Testing and Implementation) currently scheduled to run from July 2021 through to March 2023.

Priority 8: Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals



“SFRS should develop a new approach to reducing unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS) demand and road risk. This approach should involve the SFRS Board setting stretching targets to support the Service’s Strategic Plan in relation to this priority.”

An Unwanted Fire Alarm Signal (UFAS) is an event which has required an operational attendance by the fire and rescue service due to the unwanted actuation of an Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) system. However, unlike other attendances, a UFAS incident will not require any firefighting action.

Accounting for almost one third of all fire and rescue activity across Scotland, UFAS incidents place a drain on front line services, increase risk to road users and cause interruption to the business sector and communities.

The reduction of UFAS is complex and challenging. Meaningful reductions in UFAS calls require a strong partnership approach at national and local level, which is underpinned by an appropriate response when a UFAS is passed to the Service.

The complexities and challenges of achieving UFAS reductions were critically examined by a UFAS Review Working Group during 2019/20. This detailed examination concluded during the first quarter of 2020/21, with key recommendations identified as a potential framework for improving existing UFAS approaches, exploring innovative solutions and evaluating potential policy changes.

These recommendations have been approved and a UFAS Review Project Board established to prioritise the recommendations and provide leadership focus, oversight and drive in support of implementing them.

Evaluating Potential Policy Changes

Evaluating potential changes to the way we respond to UFAS when they are passed to the Service will be a key priority of the UFAS Review Project Board over the next 12 months. Evaluation will be conducted using robust options appraisal methodology to identify a strategy for responding to AFAs, that will achieve an optimum balance of:

- Minimising risk to public and firefighter safety
- Maintaining an effective response to confirmed fires originating as an AFA
- Maximising efficiency savings through reducing mobilisations and expanding our capacity to invest in prevention and other value adding activities
- Having regard to relevant risk factors e.g. time of day, occupancy, and special risks
- Supporting our commitment to achieving carbon reduction targets of AFA response options.

In conducting the options appraisal, the process will be guided by core principles to ensure that decisions take account of all relevant considerations, including engagement and consultation with staff and key stakeholders. This means that the final recommendation on the preferred option for responding to AFAs will be shaped by feedback from staff and stakeholders.

It is anticipated this document will be submitted to our Board for approval next year following a 12-week public consultation exercise.

SPOTLIGHT: INTERIM RESPONSE TO AFAs DURING COVID-19

Due to the developing situation regarding Covid-19, in March 2020 a rapid review of our operational response hierarchy was undertaken. This review included options to reduce our attendance at AFA actuations, with the aim of:

- Reducing operational resource demand
- Increasing capacity to support the wider Covid-19 response
- Reducing road risk, and
- Minimising the potential exposure of staff and the public to transmission of Covid-19.

Ensuring there was sufficient flexibility to deliver these outcomes, and meet the internal and external demands being placed on us during the Covid-19 pandemic, was the overarching principle underpinning any interim strategy for responding to AFAs during the pandemic.

Interim procedures setting out a three-staged approach for responding to AFA actuations, which could be either phased-in or each stage considered as a stand-alone strategy, were developed and implemented efficiently.

Since the beginning of May 2020, we have been operating under Stage One of the interim procedures for responding to AFAs during the pandemic. This stage is a blanket one pump attendance strategy with certain exemption.

This reduced level of response has had the effect of reducing blue light journeys by an estimated 7788, based on data up to the end of September 2020, minimising the risk of community exposure during the pandemic.

Preliminary results from a staff survey conducted to assess the impact of the AFA blanket one pump attendance strategy, indicate that most staff agree that this response to AFA actuations is delivering its intended priorities, and that SFRS should maintain it.

The above estimated reductions in blue light journeys coupled with initial survey findings, highlight the potential benefits of considering alternative responses to AFAs.

Priority 9: Effective Governance and Performance



“The SFRS should ensure it has an effective approach to performance management to support robust scrutiny of the Service at national and local levels. This approach should be regularly reviewed and evaluated in pursuit of continuous improvement. The SFRS should also collect, produce and analyse data and other intelligence to promote the safety and well-being of communities, support operational efficiency and performance improvements (including its partnership contributions) and enable effective public reporting of performance.”

The overarching benefit of a sound governance operating model is that it enables our Board, its committees and our Executive functions to execute their responsibilities properly and with greater assurance that they have done so.

An internal audit of our Corporate Governance arrangements across the Service has taken place during this reporting period. The final report will be used to fully begin our journey developing an overarching Corporate Governance Framework and Operating Model. As well as using the finding of the report, we recognise the importance of incorporating any lessons learned during the unprecedented impact that Covid-19 has, and continues to have, on how we operate and continue to do in such hugely challenging times.

The SFRS Corporate Governance Framework will ultimately provide a clear SFRS Framework of Governance from Board level and across all Executive levels of the organisation. This will ensure effective business management and supporting structures continue to be in place.

We will be looking to build this upon underlying principles such as accountability, transparency and openness, integrity, stewardship, efficiency, and leadership. The key benefits of having this in place are that it will give further structure, oversight responsibilities, talent and culture, and infrastructure. It will enable us to develop a governance operating model which will give a mechanism we can then use at Board, Senior Leadership and Management level to translate the elements of the governance framework and policies into practices, procedures, and role responsibilities within the corporate governance infrastructure. It is intended that this model will help enable the execution of governance responsibilities at all levels throughout the Service.

Work has commenced to develop a timeline and deliver early benchmarking exercises. Meanwhile, alongside the development of this significant piece of work, we continue to develop and strengthen our existing governance arrangements as part of our desire to ensure continual improvement in everything we do. This has included adapting our governance processes to ensure active scrutiny remains in place.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the SFRS Board have continued to follow national guidelines and this has had an impact on how the Board conduct their business. All essential business of our Board and its Committees has had to be conducted via video or telephone conference with participating members and senior officers dialing in from various locations.

The Board have ensured, until such time where we can return to business as usual, all agendas and papers for meetings will continue to be published on our website in advance of meetings, with a full minute being published once it has been approved.

Data Analysis

As we continue to evolve as a Service, providing ever more complex responses to increased challenges we must ensure that our data and evidence base is being used in the best possible way to provide insight and analysis to support strategic and operational decision making.

In support of this, our Data Services Function have continued to develop relationships with academia, investing time and resource to support research and innovation through partnerships with Scottish universities forging what we hope will be long-term collaborative relationships.

Professional Development has also been key in this relationship with staff currently being supported in a four-year distance learning MSc Data Sciences programme. The desired outcome is that our own team will lead more in-house development of analytical projects aimed at supporting the long-term vision of the Service.

We want our Business Intelligence function to become an exemplar for all Fire and Rescue Services in the years ahead and are continually looking at the tools we use to develop descriptive analytics. During the first half of this fiscal year we have invested in developing the Service's Performance Management System, whilst exploring future analytical options that collectively make better use of presenting and visualising data to provide greater insight to the decision makers of the Service.

Understanding the value of data requires good design, sound methods and robust quality assurance. As a demonstration of our commitment in this area, SFRS are now named in legislation as 'Producers of Official Statistics' which provides us with the opportunity to assign this designation to our existing statistical publications. This has meant that, for the first time, both our Incident statistics and Fire Safety and Organisational Statistics have been published with this designation this year.

Financial and risk management practices

Our Annual Procurement Report, covering the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, was approved in August 2020.

The report meets our requirement under the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 but importantly highlights the significant procurement activity undertaken by us in awarding 63 regulated contracts totalling more than £48.5M.

The report outlines our commitment to deliver on our sustainability duty and demonstrates community benefits through the delivery of procurement activity, including:

- Small / Medium enterprises – over 42% of SFRS total spend was with suppliers based in Scotland and 46% of overall supplier base classified as SMEs
- Carbon Emissions – we achieved a 15% reduction largely enabled by delivery of cleaner grid energy sources

- Property activity – McDonald Road modernisation completely reconfiguring and refurbishing the station and Newbridge training centre construction at a cost of £10.4 M with a local labour usage of 99.9%.

In October 2020, our Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 were completed and ratified by the Board.

A statutory requirement, this document reports on our overall performance and activities over the previous financial year. This year's document highlights that, once again, the SFRS managed its financial performance within expenditure limits and received a clean audit certificate for 2019/20.

To continue to develop our financial and reporting practices, a programme of work has been established which contains several projects to deliver a fully integrated digital solution that meets our needs for our People, Training, Finance and Assets Systems.

A programme dossier has been approved and a Programme Board established to monitor and discuss programme progress against the dossier as well as budget tracking and emerging programme risks.

This work will be led by a Programme Manager who has been recruited. Our focus will now be to progress to recruitment of the wider programme team.

Engagement has also commenced with various internal stakeholders to ensure that functional business needs are considered and that they align with wider programme objectives.

Maintaining ICT security

SFRS is a Cyber Catalyst within the Scottish Government's Cyber Security Action Plan. The ICT Team has been working with partners externally and within the Service to fulfil the requirements of the Public-Sector Action Plan and we have already achieved accreditation to the Cyber Essentials standard.

With more people working remotely, the roll out of Multi Factor Authentication (MFA) has begun across the Service, due to be completed by December 2020. MFA is a security system that needs more than one method of authentication to confirm the identity of a user. This can happen when users log on to our Office 365 system from a new location or a non-SFRS device, ensuring robust security of our ICT systems and networks.

As part of our approach to minimising the risk from cyber threats, a new system allowing users to reset passwords remotely without the need to contact ICT Helpdesk will also be introduced. This system will help to ensure that we continue to operate as effectively and safely as possible.

To assist and improve collaboration our ICT Team will bring forward the planned migration of Microsoft Teams – the latest collaboration product from Microsoft that will replace our current system.

In September, our new cyber security and awareness campaign for 2020 was launched. With

Covid-19 affecting the way in which our staff carry out our roles, having a strong understanding of the cyber risks to the organisation has never been more important.

Criminals are using increasingly sophisticated ways to steal information and, as a trusted public-sector organisation, our information could be of particular interest to those with malicious intent. To help avoid some of the main online threats to the Service, this mandatory training has been made available to all staff via CybSafe and includes testing of understanding through assessment.

ICT continues to develop and implement technical controls including security patching of all devices, infrastructure and applications. Work has been undertaken to develop a revised SFRS Digital Strategy for 2021-2024. Following extensive consultation and engagement across the Service, it is anticipated that the document will be presented for approval in December 2020.

Our environmental commitments

Following the recent climate change emergency declaration, we published our [SFRS Climate Change Response Plan 2045](#).

Committed to supporting this Scottish Government agenda, we will be on the front line in responding to the impacts of climate change in Scotland. We aim to reduce and limit our own contribution to the causes of climate change.

We have a wide range of hard hitting targets and commitments within our plan and we will drive down carbon emissions in line with Scottish Government direction.

We will take positive action wherever the opportunity and resources combine. We recognise the Scottish Government's long-term commitment to deliver a net zero emissions Scotland by 2045 and will align SFRS policy and activities accordingly to work towards this commitment.

SPOTLIGHT: REDUCING ENERGY USAGE IN OUR STATIONS

Reducing energy usage and fuel bills has earned three of our Community Fire Stations a place in the top ten league table of a UK wide annual Green Action competition – with the number one spot going to Comrie RDS Fire Station in Perthshire, as well as political acclaim from Mid Scotland & Fife MSP, Liz Smith.

Comrie managed to save an incredible £1,826, which is a 62% reduction compared to winter 2018/19. Results show what is possible through simple behavioural changes.

The winning station received investment in an environmentally beneficial project bespoke to their building.

The top ten also featured South Lochs (Isle of Lewis) in second place and Shotts (South Lanarkshire) in at number five.

A total of 67 stations from across Britain took part, including 10 from Scotland.

Priority 10: People



“The SFRS should aim to be an employer of choice – maximising the effectiveness of its approach to workforce planning; promoting the safety, health and well-being of all staff; and being a learning organisation with opportunities for all. The SFRS should also seek to be an organisation that is more representative of the people and communities of Scotland that it serves.”

We are committed to being an employer of choice and this includes securing a diverse workforce which is representative of the communities we serve.

Earlier this year, a Programme of Positive Action activities and initiatives were redesigned to include new and innovative ways of connecting with members of under-represented groups and to provide a range of information that promotes us as an employer of choice. The programme has been designed to support the delivery of the Positive Action Strategy launched at the beginning of 2020. This document outlines our commitment to addressing areas of underrepresentation to create greater diversity of our workforce.

We have commenced a programme of outreach activity and engagement with various under-represented groups to improve our links within the community and to help understand and address barriers to employment with us for specific groups. As part of this, we are now working with other organisations to explore opportunities for joint working on Positive Action including Police Scotland who have expressed an interest in a partnership working event.

Development of a long-term communications plan is key to supporting this area of work and will be launched both internally and externally in the second half of the year.

Our Balancing the Workforce Profile Action Plan continues to be a key area of focus to help attract and retain people from underrepresented groups. In addition to the positive action activities outlined above, initiatives to support our commitment to youth employment have been further developed in the first half of the year through the Career Ready scheme, our Modern Apprenticeships, and work to develop as a Corporate Parent.

Career Ready is a national charity that links schools and students with employers. The Scheme offers us the opportunity to meaningfully engage with school students and increase their understanding of the wide-ranging career options available to them. It aims to improve career and work prospects for young people who have limited access to professional networks and role models from the world of work.

Following the success of our pilot Career Ready internship programme in 2019/20, an evaluation exercise was completed to inform expansion of the scheme. Work is underway to connect SFRS mentors with a further eight students for 2020/21. As well as benefitting the young people, the programme offers our staff a personal development opportunity as a volunteer mentor.

The Career Ready internships involved job shadowing, one-to-one coaching and practical workplace demonstrations. Students from the pilot participated in a range of work tasks and had input from various departments. During the development of this year’s course, we will build on

feedback from the previous year to ensure the placement allows students to achieve their personal aims and objectives, gain a greater understanding of the range of careers we offer and provide support and encouragement to those who would like to secure employment with us in the future.

Since becoming a corporate parent in April 2015, our ambition has been to do everything we can to improve the life chances of care experienced individuals. Work has commenced on the development of employability workshops for care experienced young people. These will be rolled out in the second half of the year and will provide an opportunity for participants to discuss barriers to employment and obtain advice and guidance to support their employability skills.

Our Modern Apprentice scheme further supports youth employment. We currently have 533 firefighter modern apprentices. The delivery of the Firefighter Modern Apprenticeship programme continues, and in-depth audits by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and Skills Development Scotland were successfully completed in Quarter 2. Both audits praised the SFRS for the comprehensive arrangements in place enabling high-quality and standardised support for the candidates, assessors and internal verifiers.

We are proud to be the largest SQA Awarding Centre for the delivery of SVQs outside of colleges in Scotland.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, work has been expedited to progress the move of programmes to virtual platforms.

Supporting Equality, Diversity, Human Rights and Inclusion

Our Strategic Plan 2019-22 describes our aspiration to be a world leading fire and rescue service and with that create 'a great place to work'. To do this, we know that equality and diversity must feed through everything we do.

Our Equality and Diversity business partnership model, underpinned by the Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment process, remains an effective method of supporting the mainstreaming of equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights across the SFRS.

A review of the Equality and Human Rights Process has been progressed with an extended deadline into 2021/22 replacing the original 2020/21 deadline to accommodate demands arising due to the Covid-19 response. Modifications have been made to the current process to facilitate urgent decision making due to the pandemic and further changes to the process to accommodate the duty to conduct Island Impact Assessments will be in place by the end of this current reporting year. The impact assessment process remains the most effective method of building equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights into decision making, policy development and policy implementation.

A review of the existing SFRS Equality Outcomes has commenced along with preparatory work to establish new Equality Outcomes for 2021 onwards. The findings of these activities will be presented to our Strategic Leadership Team and Board for publication in April 2021. This will form part of the statutory reporting requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 and includes the preparation and publication of the Mainstreaming Report.

A key means of facilitating mainstreaming of equality across the organisation is the Equality

Partnership Group. Participants are drawn from each Directorate and Service Delivery Area and the forum provides a vehicle to share and promote equality information and priorities, collate and disseminate examples of good practice, and consider emerging equality issues. Along with the Corporate Parenting Group, the Equality Partnership Group provides a mechanism to support equality related activities being identified, progressed and implemented remotely across the Service and not the responsibility of a single team.

Providing support to colleagues through the Equality and Diversity Business partners is supplemented by the provision of impact assessment training, specialist topic training such as LGBT Leadership for Executive and Non-Executive Leaders and Equality Champions training helps support individual responsibility for the equality agenda.

The establishment of Equality Champions drawn from the senior management tiers provides a humanising touch to corporate equality messaging and highlights the individual personal commitment to equality by our leaders.

Visual cues for highlighting the importance of equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights has featured prominently from the availability of rainbow lanyards to show alliance with LGBT communities and colleagues to regular corporate communications on key events such as LGBT History Month and the promotion of materials to support colleagues who are victims or encounter victims of domestic abuse.

Alongside our strategic objectives and ambition to be the best employer we can be, we have a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to remove all unfair discrimination and bias from the workplace.

To meet both legal and moral obligations the '*We are Positive About Disability - Guide to Reasonable Adjustments and Supporting Staff with a Disability*' has been established. This guidance will support and embed a culture that is positive about disability, where stereotypical thinking is challenged. It will ensure that appropriate guidance is in place to support our individual employees and line managers.

Listening to our employees, their experiences and views is a critical feature of an improving organisation. In addition to our corporate communications and formal staff engagement measures, a process to facilitate the creation of equality related Employee Networks has been established. The Networks are an avenue for people who may have similar life experiences, share a protected characteristic or have an interest in the protected characteristic, to meet online. A LGBT Network has been set up and a Women's Network is currently being established.

Alongside the Networks programme we have Strategic and Senior management representatives who are Equality Champions across a range of protected characteristics and themes including champions for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), Care Experienced & Carers, Disability and Tackling Domestic Abuse.

SPOTLIGHT: AN INCLUSIVE SFRS

As part of our ongoing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, we supported International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOTB) on Sunday 17 May 2020 by flying the Rainbow flag at SFRS and area headquarter buildings to show our support for LGBT people, and to continue to raise awareness of the ongoing issues lesbian, gay, bi and trans people face every day.

In June we once again supported Pride Month, welcoming this annual celebration of togetherness and unity with the LGBTQ+ community.

This year the events were socially distanced or held virtually, promoting positive discussion and debate for staff around building a more inclusive and diverse workforce which reflects the very diverse communities we serve. We were literally flying the pride colours from our buildings across the country as well as our internal platforms, digital channels and email signatures, using the rainbow crest for the month.

We have already been recognised by Stonewall Scotland as a Diversity Champion. We will continue to work closely with Stonewall to develop an improvement plan, and other partners to encourage people from all walks of life to consider a career with the Service.

Health and Wellbeing

We care for our staff through progressive health, safety and wellbeing arrangements and strive to be proactive and innovative in how we achieve this.

During this reporting period, Covid-19 has heavily influenced this area. We have worked continually to safeguard our staff as far as practicable. The following suite of risk control documents have been developed and implemented to support the safe occupation of SFRS workplaces:

- Covid-19 Workplace Management Arrangement
- Covid-19 Workplace Risk Assessments for all SFRS Workplaces
- Covid-19 Workplace Management Plans for all SFRS Workplaces
- Covid-19 Secure Posters - supporting clear and concise communication of control measures within workplaces
- Covid-19 RIDDOR Reporting Notification and Case Management Process.

At present, 89% of our workplaces have been declared Covid Secure.

There is a legal requirement for us to consider all Covid-19 cases within the workplace. This is to establish whether there is sufficient evidence to suggest there has been a workplace transmission of coronavirus. We do this via Covid-19 management meetings. These meetings also perform a quality assurance role, identifying any good practice and failings in control measures. Of the 74 Covid-19 management meetings that have taken place to discuss cases with the Service, 19% (14 of 74) have been identified as possible workplace transmissions.

Our Health and Safety team have undertaken 33 support visits to a range of workplaces with a focus on Operations Control, HQ Buildings, Asset Resource Centres and Training Centres.

The need to deliver many critical business activities during the pandemic has resulted in a requirement to systematically consider the required activities and undertake an evaluation of the risk. Without this process the risk would be undefined and arguably uncontrolled, examples of critical activities include recruitment, IFE examinations and training to support the safe delivery of critical activities. Our Health and Safety Team have supported the development of specific risk assessment and safe systems of work across directorates and Service Delivery Areas.

Ensuring we meet our legal health and safety duties has also remained a focus throughout the period as we continue to work towards our Health and Safety Management Information System (HSMIS). The HSMIS supports us in monitoring, measuring and implementing our health and safety arrangements in accordance with all statutory duties placed upon the Service.

Significant progress has been made on the development of the system during the reporting period with final development work completed along with user testing for the first module - event reporting and investigation. A launch date has been set for 1 October 2020. The module is supported by user training consisting of e-learning, user manuals and a training test site. Development of future modules continues with process mapping completed for essential modules such as risk assessment. It is anticipated that this will be launched in March 2021.

The implementation and launch of the HSMIS will allow Service Delivery Areas and Functions to interrogate their safety performance locally as and when required. The system will also produce bespoke, detailed performance reports for the SFRS which will identify targeted actions and monitor improvements.

Homeworking

Although significant work has been carried out to make our working premises Covid-secure, the introduction of lockdown changed the way many of our staff had to work. Our support staff who are predominantly office-based, were no longer able to access certain buildings and were asked to work remotely.

Our ICT colleagues have been instrumental in responding to the impact of the pandemic by supporting our staff to be able to work effectively from home. Laptops were provided where possible, alongside guidance and support for the use of personal equipment.

The earlier implementation of Office 365 and Direct Access allowed this shift in working practice to take place quickly and easily, facilitating staff access to files and systems from home locations. The use of Skype for virtual meetings and calls has increased significantly since the end of March.

As the pandemic progressed, ICT also then provided additional laptops to staff who previously did not have them. Since the end of March 2020, 380 laptops have been allocated and we are now distributing additional equipment such as screens and docking stations to support Display Screen Equipment requirements.

Homeworking on a regular basis presented new challenges, so our Health and Wellbeing team put together a booklet to support employees to manage physical and mental health while working from home. A Covid-19 homeworking checklist was made available, designed to assist in reviewing home environments and take all reasonable measures to maintain good posture, health and wellbeing while working on computers - as well as a few simple ideas to assist remote working with kids around.

Physical health arrangements

Despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, the physical health of our staff remains as important as it ever was. Development of our Health and Wellbeing systems continues to support improvements in the delivery of health and wellbeing services.

To help reduce the number of cancellations and non-attendance at appointments, an appointment text reminder service is being developed which will also reduce waiting times and allow cancelled appointments to be reallocated to others.

Financial resources have been allocated to support the electronic scanning of medical and fitness records and a contract is scheduled to be awarded early 2021 for this work to be carried out. These improvements will ensure resources can be used more effectively through remote and immediate access to records, ensuring clinical availability is used to its full capacity, as well as a reduction in storage requirements and cost.

The Chief Fire Officers Association Firefit Steering Group, in conjunction with the University of Bath, have completed a scientific study to identify the cardiorespiratory fitness standards for UK fire and rescue services, the methods by which fitness should be assessed and a recommended fitness management process. This includes the use of a firefighter simulation test (fireground fitness assessment) that should be undertaken by staff who are unable to meet the required recommended cardiorespiratory fitness standard as a final determinant of fitness for role. We don't currently have the required facilities and equipment to complete this fireground fitness assessment across a significant proportion of stations. Therefore, a research project will be commissioned to develop an alternative assessment and associated performance standard that are as close as reasonably possible regarding physical demands as the assessment nationally, whilst being practicable for the Service.

This will enable us to ensure employees can undertake their role safely and effectively through adoption of fitness standards and methods of assessment that align with existing UK fire and rescue service physical employment standards research and national recommendations for best practice. It is anticipated that invitations to quote to undertake this project will be issued towards the end of 2020, with a view to the project being concluded in 2022.

Advice from clinical bodies and the Health and Safety Executive in relation to carrying out health and wellbeing assessments has changed frequently during the Covid-19 pandemic and expert advice is closely monitored to ensure that assessments are carried out safely. This has resulted in recruitment health assessments being adapted to exclude aerosol generating procedures and the temporary suspension of routine health assessments for existing staff.

Engagement with stakeholders on alternative delivery options has allowed us to restart routine assessments supported by robust risk assessments whilst remaining alert to the ongoing impact that Covid restrictions may have.

Work has taken place over the reporting period, to adopt clinical governance – a system through which accountability for the continuous improvement of quality of services is adopted. Whilst this is mandatory in the NHS, it isn't for the Service, however, the adoption of clinical governance will provide an effective framework for the planning and provision of health and wellbeing services to our staff. The SFRS Clinical Governance Action Plan has been updated and will be delivered over a 5-year period ensuring that it remains flexible to consider emerging priorities resulting from Covid-19.

The nature of firefighters' activities carried out may present an increased risk from contact of both blood borne and water borne viruses. Work has commenced on a project to deliver a combined Hepatitis A/B vaccination programme for front line staff. The initial focus will be on developing a plan to include the policies required and developing a communications plan to promote and encourage the take up of the vaccines from staff. It will also include implementation in a small number of stations so that early lessons can be learned and benefits measured prior to a wider roll out across the Service.

Our commitment to health and wellbeing also focuses on the longer-term impact for staff and we continue to keep up to date with emerging issues and developments. Research has shown that continued exposure to contaminants can cause longer term health issues for firefighters. We have established an action plan structured around the key themes of Station/Training Centre Design, Appliance Design, PPE, Occupational Health, Training, Records and Assets. In addition, SFRS has entered into a research agreement for the University of Central Lancashire to undertake a research project within the field of firefighters' exposure and contamination from various fire effluents with the Fire Brigades Union over a three-year period.

We have also looked on a wider basis at our people policies and procedures and are reviewing the Attendance Management Policy with a view to supporting people with life limiting conditions. We are committing to the STUC 'Dying to Work' charter, as well as establishing relationships with charities who can help us support staff affected by such conditions.

Provision of structural firefighting Personal, Protective Equipment has continued during the period ensuring our firefighters have the clothing they need to keep them safe. It is anticipated that the roll-out of the new kits will be completed next year, 12-months ahead of the planned distribution programme.

Every firefighter across Scotland will receive two sets of structural firefighter clothing that has: an outer layer to protect against flame injury; a moisture barrier to protect against water penetration whilst allowing internal moisture vapour to escape; and an inner thermal barrier and lining to protect against heat from proximity to flame.

Mental Health

We recognise that good mental health is as important as physical health and we are committed to ensuring our staff are equipped to identify poor mental health in themselves, their colleagues and their families; and fundamentally to know how they can be supported.

We aim to ensure mental health is mainstreamed across everything we do. This means it will be fully integrated within our culture; our policies; practices; development programmes and in how we go about our daily working lives.

Our Mental Health Strategy was launched in June 2020 and its action plan will be delivered through our newly formed Mental Health Board. In addition, a Covid-19 Wellbeing Group has also been established. The initial focus has been the provision of practical support and leadership development tools to support the transition of managing staff remotely; engaging with external bodies on researching mental health matters and suicide intervention methods and support.

In May, we participated in Mental Health Awareness Week, promoting the theme of kindness and encouraging staff to share their experiences through our staff Facebook page. We also ran some online sessions aimed at supporting our staff to look after their mental health.

Work is also continuing in collaboration with Scottish Government, Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service to develop the Lifelines programme. The project aims to deliver a tailored mental health and resilience framework for emergency and first responders in Scotland. The initial elements of the plan will focus on website development and resources which is due to be launched late 2020, and recruiting people to provide training to the three Services.

During lockdown, Prince William spoke with Lifelines Scotland and a small number of emergency service workers, including the Service's Deputy Assistant John Miller. During the virtual meeting with the prince, the partnership work taking place within our respective organisations was discussed.

Training and developing our People

Once in employment, ensuring that our staff receive appropriate training to carry out their role effectively, efficiently and safely has continued to be a priority for us.

We have moved to ensure that vital training of our staff has been able to continue during the pandemic. Guidance was produced for our operational crews to facilitate local on-station training and maintain competence in their key core skills during Coronavirus restrictions. This took account of national guidance from Scottish Government and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and was composed in consultation with Trade Union Representative Bodies.

The creation of streamlined on-line operational training materials supported this training delivery model to enable 12 core skills modules to be accessed remotely via our Learning Content Management System, thereby enabling staff to complete technical knowledge training without physically attending their stations. This reduced the time and frequency that staff had to be in attendance at their stations by limiting their attendance solely for practical skills application sessions. Training Instructors have supported local delivery where needed including providing

quality assurance of the training undertaken at Community Fire Stations.

Initial acquisition training courses for the induction of new Wholetime and Retained Firefighters into SFRS has primarily been facilitated at our Training Centres. A further local course was facilitated at Huntly Community Fire Station to assist us to maintain crewing levels, support local delivery and reduce the need for extended travel requirements to other areas of Scotland. Risk Assessments by Training Function Officers, supported by Health and Safety Advisors, have been undertaken at all our Training Centres to ensure compliance with Coronavirus guidance and ensure 'Covid Secure' status at each of our 12 sites throughout Scotland.

Further work is being undertaken to pilot and evaluate the use of Thermal Monitoring Temperature Testing at all our National Training Centres prior to staff entering the buildings. Scoping work has been instigated to identify where additional temporary facilities, such as Portacabin structures for classrooms and staff welfare, could be located. Collaborative work across the Service continues to identify further Community Fire Stations where additional training delivery could be facilitated. Collectively this will enable us to maximise the capacity at each Training Centre and identified Community Fire Station venue, whilst ensuring Coronavirus guidance restrictions are observed.

Some courses have been more difficult to facilitate during the restrictions; however, careful planning has taken place to ensure that these courses for critical skills can continue – one such skill was Driver Training. A specific Risk Assessment and Safe System of Work was developed to protect Training Instructors and staff undertaking driving courses. This was done in full consultation with all Driver Training Teams across the Service and considered guidance from Scottish Government, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and NFCC. The recruitment of four additional Driver Training Instructors has taken place during this reporting period. These appointments have been focused on the North Service Delivery Area with three Driver Training Instructors taking up post so far to support local delivery and further enhance our capacity and resilience.

Enhanced use of technology has been embraced throughout the pandemic to help deliver our training. The introduction of a mobile Application (App) available via personal mobile phones for operational staff has been introduced. This application is an extension of our current Learning Content Management System. The application was initially aimed at Flexi Duty Officers but has now been extended to all operational staff. The App contains many programmes including: operational checklists for reference at emergency incidents, station details, Frontline Updates and Covid-19 Task Cards which provide guidance relating to procedures during the pandemic. Throughout this reporting period the App has been routinely updated to include guidance and learning materials relating to the pandemic.

Laptops have been issued to all Trainee Firefighters and many of our staff within the Training Function to allow remote working and access to training materials and systems. Course delivery programmes have been amended to allow remote delivery using Skype and Microsoft Teams wherever possible to reduce physical attendance at our Training Centre venues. Collectively, this has enabled our Firefighters to continue to train and remain able to respond effectively, efficiently and safely throughout this period.

The redevelopment and upgrading of our Portlethen training facility is progressing well. The impacts of Covid upon this project closed the site down for around four months, however, since reopening the contractors have worked tirelessly to bring this back on track and ensure that the site is

completed with as minimum disruption as possible. It is anticipated that the work will be completed by June 2021.

Developing our Leaders

Developing and strengthening leadership capability, capacity and resilience across the Service continues to be a key priority. This is pivotal in enabling the development of organisational culture, which supports the ongoing evolution of the Service and enables effective succession planning and organisational outcomes.

We continue to develop our leadership capability which centres around strategic organisational needs, taking an agile approach to leadership at all levels. In progression of the opportunities for collaboration through the Scottish Emergency Services National Collaboration Strategy, agreement has been reached to establish the Collaborative Leadership Project through a shared resource and learning model.

Key achievements in the first six months of 2020/21 have included:

- Delivery of the Chief Officer's Online Leadership Engagement Sessions during September 2020. These events built on the success of last year's SFRS Leadership Event: Leadership in a Complex World, as the first step in engaging with the leadership cohort in shaping the SFRS long term strategic vision.
- The Leading-Edge Senior Leadership Team Development Programme continues albeit with some adjustment due to the pandemic.
- The SFRS 'Leadership for Change Programme' was reviewed and adapted to facilitate its onwards delivery on a virtual platform in support of organisational priorities.
- Early scoping and benchmarking is underway to support the development of the SFRS Succession Planning Framework to strengthen the approach to Talent Management. This will complement the existing leadership and technical development processes, taking cognisance of the leadership behaviours and competency framework to ensure consistency across the organisation.
- Establishment of Leadership Development Centres (LDCs) for middle managers is progressing, although at a reduced pace due to the changed organisational priorities. Psychometrics to inform LDCs, talent management/development and succession planning activity are scoped and will align to resourcing and collaboration activity to ensure consistency.
- A series of leadership toolkits were developed and published to support managers and their teams during the pandemic. This included the following initial themes:
 - Engagement, Motivation and Remote Working
 - Productivity During Times of Uncertainty
 - Navigate and Lead Through Change
 - Resilience and Wellbeing
 - Proactivity
- The well-established partnership with the Collective Learning Partnership and Scottish Union Learning Fund (Lifelong Learning Programme) continues to support our staff to access personal development courses that range from Spanish for Beginners to British Sign Language, Microsoft Office 365, Mental Health Awareness, Menopause and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Introduction.

Pay, Reward and Benefits

Our staff are our most important asset and we strive to deliver attractive pay, rewards and benefits to them.

Following standardisation of uniformed terms and conditions in 2018/19, the Service continues to monitor the effectiveness of these in meeting Service requirements, as well as the needs of our employees. As part of this work, a final review of the arrangements surrounding detached duties is underway to ensure that these revised arrangements are fit for purpose.

We have sought assistance with the aim of concluding the harmonisation of Retained Duty System terms and conditions by end of the calendar year. Negotiations have also been undertaken in the first half of this year to seek to harmonise the terms and conditions of employees within the national and local training instructor pools and is reaching the final stages. This aims to conclude standardisation of terms and conditions for these remaining employee groups by the end of 2020/21.

Agreement was reached on a UK wide pay award for uniformed staff in September 2020, backdated to July 2020.

Looking ahead, work is due to commence on our Equal Pay Statement and Gender Pay Gap report as part of our statutory obligations for publication in April 2021. This will inform future actions to seek to further reduce the gender pay gap within SFRS.

We continue to work towards enhancing our Total Reward Framework to support employee engagement, attraction and retention. An SFRS Employee Recognition Scheme was approved at the end of 2019/20. This was ready to be launched at the start of the current financial year, however, has been postponed until the 2021/22 financial year due to Covid-19.

Instead, a one-off SFRS Covid-19 Employee Recognition Process, based on the principles of the SFRS Recognition Scheme, has been developed and will take place in 2020/21. The initiative will recognise and reward our staff who have gone above and beyond in displaying outstanding behaviours and contributions to both the Service and their communities during this unprecedented time.

Amendments have been made to the Employee Benefits Framework increasing the spend available within the Cycle to Work Scheme. Participants can now spend up to £3,000 to facilitate the purchase of a more diverse range of bikes, including E-bikes. This was prioritised due to the increase in employees cycling to work because of Covid-19.

Work has been undertaken to develop an Agile Working Toolkit and Homeworking Policy to complement the existing Flexible Working Policy. This supports our goal to be a flexible, inclusive employer and will also be an enabler for the 'Reset and Renew Routemap' as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic and support SFRS in achieving our strategic objectives and outcomes.

Strategic Resourcing Plan

We work hard to retain our staff however it is natural and expected that staff will leave either through retirement or resignation. It is important that we plan for this when and where possible.

During the reporting period, a joint project was carried out with the Scottish Public Pensions Agency to confirm the retirement profile of our Wholetime Operational Staff. This has led to the development of a six-year external recruitment and internal promotion schedule.

We have also predicted our Retained leavers profile to more accurately plan for this group of staff. Dedicated resource has been allocated to manage support staff leavers and vacancies to improve candidate and recruitment manager experience in this group of staff.

The pandemic has had a significant negative impact on resourcing, leading to the development of several focus and action groups. We continue to work with stakeholders to develop a detailed resourcing recovery plan in line with the Strategic Resourcing Plan requirements.