A review of service reform in Scottish fire and rescue authorities

AUDIT SCOTLAND

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Summary

Scottish fire and rescue authorities have responded positively to the challenge of reforming their services and have made progress in shifting their priorities towards fire prevention and community safety. However, the rate of change has been variable and it is too early to demonstrate a sustained reduction in risks from fire.

Background

1. A National Joint Council (NJC) agreement in 2003 linked improved pay and conditions for fire and rescue authority (FRA) employees across the UK to a programme of service reform intended to promote a more targeted and risk-based approach to prevention, protection and emergencies. FRAs are now expected to give greater priority to improving the safety of communities by reducing the risks from fire and other emergencies and to the training and development of their workforce. The impact of service reform is being felt across all areas of the fire and rescue service, from elected members to operational firefighters.

2. In March and October 2004 Audit Scotland published two progress reports[1] on whether the intended benefits of modernisation were being delivered locally by Scotland's eight FRAs. Subsequently, the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and accompanying statutory guidance, the *Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland*, provided the legislative framework for service reform and set out national priorities, objectives and guidance for FRAs.

About the study

3. Our October 2004 report concluded there was still a significant amount of work to be done before real change became evident on the ground. In 2006, we undertook a further national study of Scottish FRAs, with a particular focus on whether:

- FRA's Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) are effectively supporting a change in emphasis from intervention to prevention

- service reform is reflected in developments in FRA's traditional organisational culture.

4. During 2006 we reviewed each FRA's performance in six areas: strategic management; fire prevention and risk management; financial management; workforce management; management of operational business; and communications.

5. In carrying out the study, we:

- reviewed submissions from each FRA describing their progress across the six areas outlined above

- interviewed the Chief Officer and senior management teams

- interviewed operational staff and carried out local focus groups with a range of staff

- attended board and committee meetings and interviewed elected members

- interviewed community planning and other partners

- reviewed relevant documentation, eg key strategies and operational plans

- analysed a range of performance information.

6. The study did not look at operational intervention. Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland (HMFSI) is undertaking an operational assurance review in 2007 and 2008.

7. Following the audit work, we prepared a local audit report for each FRA which presented our findings and conclusions against the six areas reviewed and identified areas for improvement. Copies of the local audit reports are available on the Audit Scotland website at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

8. This national report presents an overview of progress on service reform in Scottish FRAs, concentrating on the main areas of change. It draws together common themes from the local audit reports and identifies good practice and areas where FRAs need to improve.

Key messages

9. Service reform is starting to deliver a number of positive changes:

- All FRAs successfully met the deadline of 1 April 2005 to have their first IRMP in place (Part 2).

- Through the introduction of IRMP significant resources have been shifted into community safety and fire prevention. All FRAs have new policies and procedures which have delivered efficiency savings and freed up staff for community fire safety activities (Part 2).

- FRAs are targeting community safety and partnership initiatives towards those at most risk. An analytical tool, the Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) model, is being used to support this work (Part 2).

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1   *Scottish Fire Services: verification of the progress of modernisation,* Accounts Commission, March 2004 and *Scottish Fire Services: second verification of the progress of modernisation,* Accounts Commission, October 2004.

- Good progress has been made in implementing the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) for wholetime operational staff (Part 5).

- FRAs are starting to embrace the equality agenda, and have implemented a variety of initiatives to drive it forward (Part 6).

10. However, there has been slower progress in a number of other areas:

- Elected members on FRAs are not meeting their statutory duties in relation to Best Value and there is limited training and support for members on joint fire and rescue boards or committees (Part 3).

- Comprehensive performance management is not yet in place in the majority of FRAs and there is limited evidence available about the impact of changes on risks and casualties in the community. Further work is required to ensure that public performance reporting meets the statutory requirements of Section 13 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 (Part 4).

- Equity of access to training and development is still variable among retained, volunteer and non-uniformed[2] staff. FRAs also need to make greater use of multi-tier entry to increase the diversity of middle and senior management posts (Part 5).

- The diversity of the workforce is not yet representative of the communities served. Only 3.9 per cent of firefighters are women while black and minority ethnic groups encompass 0.5 per cent of the total workforce. This is despite targeted 'positive action' recruitment campaigns. For FRAs to make significant improvements in this area will require a shift in cultural attitudes (Part 6).

11. The Scottish Executive provided about £47 million transitional funding over the period 2004/05 to 2007/08 to help FRAs meet the costs of the NJC agreement. FRAs have started making efficiency gains to cover these costs from 2008/09; however, they need to continue exploring opportunities for further efficiencies in order to progress service reform (Part 4). In addition, FRAs face an increasing financial risk arising from their pension liabilities for operational firefighters, which are unfunded and starting to impact on the revenue available for service delivery. The Scottish Executive is currently reviewing a number of different options for funding firefighter pensions (Part 7).

Recommendations

12. The report makes 17 recommendations where further work is required to meet fully the aspirations for fire and rescue services in Scotland set out in the legislation and national framework. Recommendations are set out at the end of each section, and collated in Part 8.

13. These recommendations cover a range of areas. In particular, FRAs need to:

- improve the systematic evaluation of community safety services and initiatives

- develop a strategic approach to partnership working, informed and directed by IRMP

- continue efforts to build a workforce which reflects the diversity of the communities they serve

- comply with legislative requirements and accepted good practice in diversity, equality and discrimination issues

- improve support for elected members to enable them to fulfil their role effectively

- strengthen performance management arrangements and reports

- improve training and development support for retained, volunteer and non-uniformed staff

- link staff appraisal and performance to organisational objectives and priorities.

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2   In this report, the term non-uniformed is used to describe only those staff who are not subject to the NJC Scheme of Conditions of Service sixth edition 2004. We have used this term in the absence of any nationally agreed description for this group of staff. Some FRAs use 'support staff' and/or 'corporate staff'.

Part 1. Setting the scene

The fire and rescue service in Scotland

14. Fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) are responsible for dealing with fires, delivering community fire safety to address fire prevention and responding to road traffic collisions, flooding and major emergencies. Day-to-day management of fire and rescue services is undertaken by the Chief Officer (CO) who is responsible to the community via local authority members appointed to the fire and rescue authority (either a joint fire and rescue board or council committee).

15. In 2005/06, about £300 million was spent on fire and rescue services in Scotland which are delivered by eight FRAs. These vary widely in size and structure reflecting the nature of their different areas. Each covers a unique mix of urban and rural communities with population densities ranging from over 3,000 per km^2 to two per km^2. These factors have an impact on how each FRA delivers its services. Exhibit 1 summarises the main difference between the eight Scottish FRAs.

16. About 9,300 staff work in the Scottish fire and rescue service. Wholetime personnel account for 49 per cent of the total, retained and volunteer make up 39 per cent, while control staff are two per cent of the total.

17. Non-uniformed staff comprise approximately ten per cent of the overall workforce and occupy an increasing number of specialist posts in areas such as equality and diversity, communications and data analysis. Their numbers are continuing to rise, as FRAs seek to appoint postholders with specialist skills to support the service reform agenda.

18. In 2005/06, FRAs attended a total of 112,450 incidents, about 300 incidents per day. A breakdown of the type of incidents attended is outlined in Exhibit 2. False alarms, either through good intent, faulty apparatus or malicious calls, accounted for nearly half of all incidents attended.

Service reform

19. FRAs are undergoing an extensive programme of service reform, underpinned by legislative changes through the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and statutory national guidance, the *Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland*. These developments are designed to move the fire and rescue service to a more targeted and risk-based approach to prevention, protection and emergency response.

20. The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 introduced a new framework to ensure that FRAs are better positioned to meet modern demands and challenges. The Act affirms new principles, placing prevention at the centre of what the fire and rescue service does. It has created new duties for FRAs to promote fire safety and help create safer communities. The new legislation covers existing activities such as rescue from fires and road traffic collisions (RTCs) and also allows for roles in other emergencies, including responding to terrorist threats.

Exhibit 1
Scottish fire and rescue authorities

Scotland has eight fire and rescue authorities, which vary in size and structure.

FRA	Population (% of Scotland)	Area (km^2)	Number of wholetime stations[1]	Number of retained and volunteer stations	Number of staff (retained and volunteer)	Number of incidents attended (2005/06)
Central Scotland	282,070 (5.6%)	2,643	4	13	475 (171)	4,996
Dumfries and Galloway	147,930 (2.9%)	6,426	1	16	364 (218)	1,906
Fife	354,600 (7%)	1,325	6	8	552 (104)	6,586
Grampian	524,020 (10.3%)	8,736	6	34	899 (455)	8,023
Highlands and Islands	279,040 (5.5%)	31,187	1	126[2]	1,417 (1,211)	5,273
Lothian and Borders	896,970 (17.7%)	6,456	13	23	1,233 (299)	21,139
Strathclyde	2,205,820 (43.4%)	13,625	39	74	3,571 (852)	56,330
Tayside	387,950 (7.6%)	7,527	6	18	780 (271)	8,197
Scotland	5,078,400	77,925	76	312	9,291 (3,581)	112,450

Notes:
1 Including wholetime/retained stations.
2 Including 31 Community Response Units.

Source: Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland and Audit Scotland fieldwork

Exhibit 2
Number and type of incidents attended by Scottish FRAs in 2005-06

Fires account for just under half the total number of incidents attended by Scottish FRAs, with false alarms accounting for the other half.
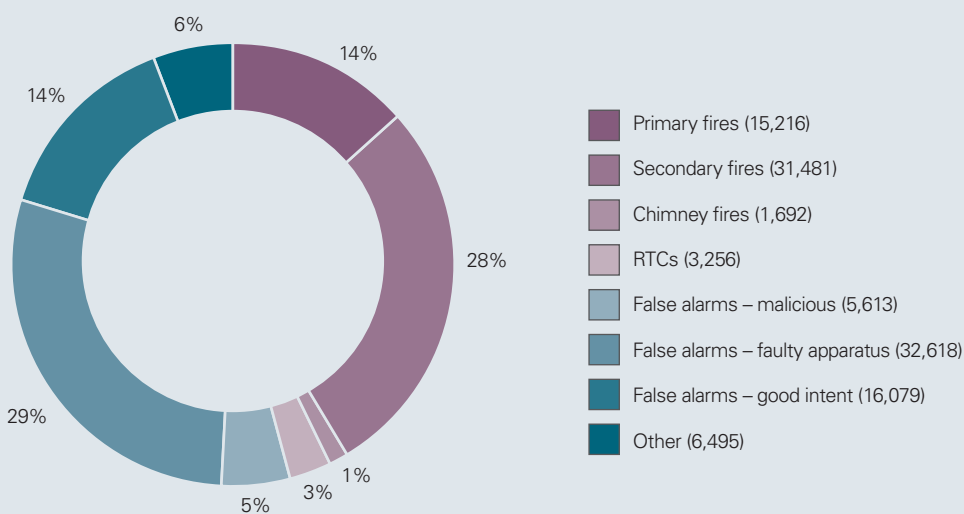
- Primary fires (15,216)
- Secondary fires (31,481)
- Chimney fires (1,692)
- RTCs (3,256)
- False alarms – malicious (5,613)
- False alarms – faulty apparatus (32,618)
- False alarms – good intent (16,079)
- Other (6,495)

Source: Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland and Audit Scotland fieldwork

21. In September 2005, the *Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland* was published, setting out national priorities, objectives and guidance to FRAs in carrying out their functions under the Fire (Scotland) Act. The framework sets out the Scottish Executive's expectations for the fire and rescue service and what support will be available to help services achieve these goals.

22. The legislation and framework require each FRA to develop an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) setting out an assessment of local risk to life and property and how the authority will deploy its resources to meet those risks. IRMPs are a major factor in the determination of staffing and capital requirements. IRMPs also support the authorities in their response to emergency incidents as well as fire prevention and community safety work.

23. The framework also recognises the unacceptably high level of deaths due to fire in Scotland, which are to be addressed through measures and initiatives implemented in the new duty to promote fire safety. The emphasis that the framework places on prevention is seen as key to reducing this high level of deaths.

24. The move to a more risk-based approach to fire prevention is intended to enable FRAs to make a significant contribution to the policy objectives outlined in the Scottish Executive's *A Partnership for a Better Scotland* for safer communities, safer staff and compliance with Best Value.

25. To ensure FRAs have the staffing resources needed to achieve the objectives of service reform a number of human resource (HR) developments have been introduced. These include the shift from a traditional rank-based structure to a competence based one through rank to role, a major element of the NJC

agreement, and a national Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) using National Occupational Standards and a suite of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs).

26. The NJC agreement and subsequent legislative changes followed a period of industrial instability within the fire and rescue service, which included strike action in late 2002 and 2003. As a result, FRAs have been implementing their IRMPs in a difficult industrial relations climate. This has had an impact on the pace of change and there is still a long way to go in developing and sustaining productive working relationships between management and representative bodies.

27. The implementation of the service reform agenda and achievement of a sustained improvement in community safety should be viewed as a continuous process requiring not only changes in the culture and ethos of fire and rescue authorities but also changes in the attitudes and behaviour of communities in Scotland.

Part 2. Prevention and risk management

Key findings

- All FRAs have introduced Integrated Risk Management Planning. Significant resources have been shifted into community safety and fire prevention.

- Community safety is an integral part of IRMP and key to reducing risk from fires. FRAs are developing a better understanding of the diverse communities they serve and have started to target their initiatives towards those most at risk.

- Partnership working is playing an increasing role in prevention and protection activities but FRAs need to adopt a more strategic approach to ensure they are using their resources effectively.

- It is too early to assess the overall impact of IRMP. Although there are some indications of progress, in particular as a result of local initiatives, FRAs cannot yet demonstrate a sustained improvement in reducing risk and must do more to evaluate systematically the effectiveness of their community safety activities.

The introduction of IRMP has significantly refocused services

28. The legislative framework requires each FRA to develop an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) setting out an assessment of local risk to life and property and identifing how the authority will deploy the resources to meet these risks. The first IRMP was to be in place from April 2005 and all FRAs successfully met this deadline.

29. All Scottish FRAs use a computer based analytical toolkit, the Fire Services Emergency Cover (FSEC) model, to inform their risk management planning and identify optimum levels of prevention and intervention resources. Good progress has been made in the use of FSEC to inform decision-making and all FRAs have dedicated and trained personnel to support this work. FRAs have used FSEC to run scenarios to review their existing service provision and consider, for example:

- where to deploy individual appliances and at what times

- whether fire stations need to be relocated to ensure resources are in the most appropriate locations to cover high-risk areas

- what staffing and watch arrangements should be deployed at particular stations to meet local risks.

30. The first full year of IRMP has seen a shift of resources in all FRAs from intervention to prevention, the introduction of several new policies and procedures to improve efficiency, and positive steps to move the focus of intervention from safeguarding property to minimising risk to people. In particular:

- across Scotland approximately 94 new community safety posts have been created as a result of departmental mergers and efficiency gains

- community safety activities are increasingly targeted towards vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups and communities at most risk of fire

- FRAs are actively involved in community planning and community safety partnerships, contributing to the wider social agenda to improve the safety and well-being of local communities

- new policies and procedures in areas such as call management, automatic fire alarms (AFAs) and aerial ladder platforms (ALPs) have delivered efficiency savings and freed up staff for community fire safety activities.

Community safety is an integral part of IRMP and key to reducing risk from fire

31. All FRAs have instigated a wide range of targeted safety campaigns and initiatives to reduce risks from fire which are being delivered using operational crews, community fire safety personnel and in partnership with other organisations.

32. FRAs have always engaged in community safety work, but prior to the introduction of IRMP and FSEC this work was not always targeted at those areas or groups most at risk. There is an increasing emphasis on the targeted delivery of preventative fire safety services into specific communities to reduce levels of risk exposure. Strathclyde, for example, has developed a community safety toolkit which allows fire station personnel to identify high-risk communities and target preventative resources accordingly. The system is also able to record and capture activity, helping the impact of local activities to be measured.

33. Through the use of risk maps (Exhibit 3) and data sharing,

FRAs have developed a good understanding of the safety risks faced by their diverse communities and have started to target their initiatives towards high-risk and disadvantaged communities including older people, people with disabilities, new communities and minority ethnic groups (Exhibit 4, page 12).

34. An important focus for all FRAs has been engagement with young people. It is estimated that 90 per cent of all secondary fires (rubbish/ refuse, derelict buildings, abandoned vehicles, etc) are a direct result of deliberate fire raising mainly carried out by young people. Fire and rescue services also experience high levels of hoax calls and attacks on fire crews (there was a 43 per cent increase in attacks in 2005/06) and these are mainly carried out by young people.

35. All FRAs are now actively involved in fire cadet schemes and youth intervention programmes such as Fire Reach, Fire Academy, Diversifire and Cool Down Crew to educate school-children about fire and other risks, and to change offending behaviour. To assist in their work, Lothian and Borders has seconded a primary school teacher to help deliver their education programme within schools, whilst Strathclyde has created a strategic youth development post.

36. At a national level, FRAs have jointly developed a Youth Development Plan. This is providing a strategic framework for youth work within FRAs, concentrating in particular on youth engagement, partnership working and training staff to work with young people.

37. While each FRA undertakes initiatives tailored to meet local needs and risks, across Scotland FRAs are involved in a number of common initiatives, for example electric blanket testing, 'Risk Watch',

'Safe Drive Stay Alive' and the national fire safety media advertising and publicity campaign 'Don't Give Fire a Home'. Through the Chief Fire Officers Association (Scotland) (CFOA(S)), FRAs share good practice and exchange ideas on their approach to these initiatives.

Progress on home fire safety visits has been mixed

38. Home fire safety visits (HFSVs) are an important and growing element of community safety work. Their purpose is to raise awareness of fire safety in the home and increase smoke detector ownership within high-risk communities.

39. In 2005/06, 90,620 households in Scotland received a HFSV (Exhibit 5, page 12). This represents 3.9 per cent of the 2.3 million households in Scotland. There is a significant variation in approach to HFSVs across Scotland. The majority of visits were carried out in Lothian and Borders, with good progress also made in Highlands and Islands and Dumfries and Galloway. Building staff commitment to this type of work is a continuing challenge. As they roll out programmes of HFSVs, FRAs need to ensure that staff are provided with effective support and training is followed up appropriately.

40. FRAs which have made the most progress in HFSVs have made good use of retained firefighters. In Highlands and Islands this was assisted by the engagement of a retired retained station officer to deliver training on carrying out HFSVs. The use of retained personnel to support HFSVs amongst the other authorities has been more limited.

Partnership working is increasingly important in community safety work

41. All FRAs are working with their local community planning partners

Exhibit 3
Typical risk map

Risk maps allow FRAs to identify areas at high risk of fire, and target their community safety initiatives in these areas.
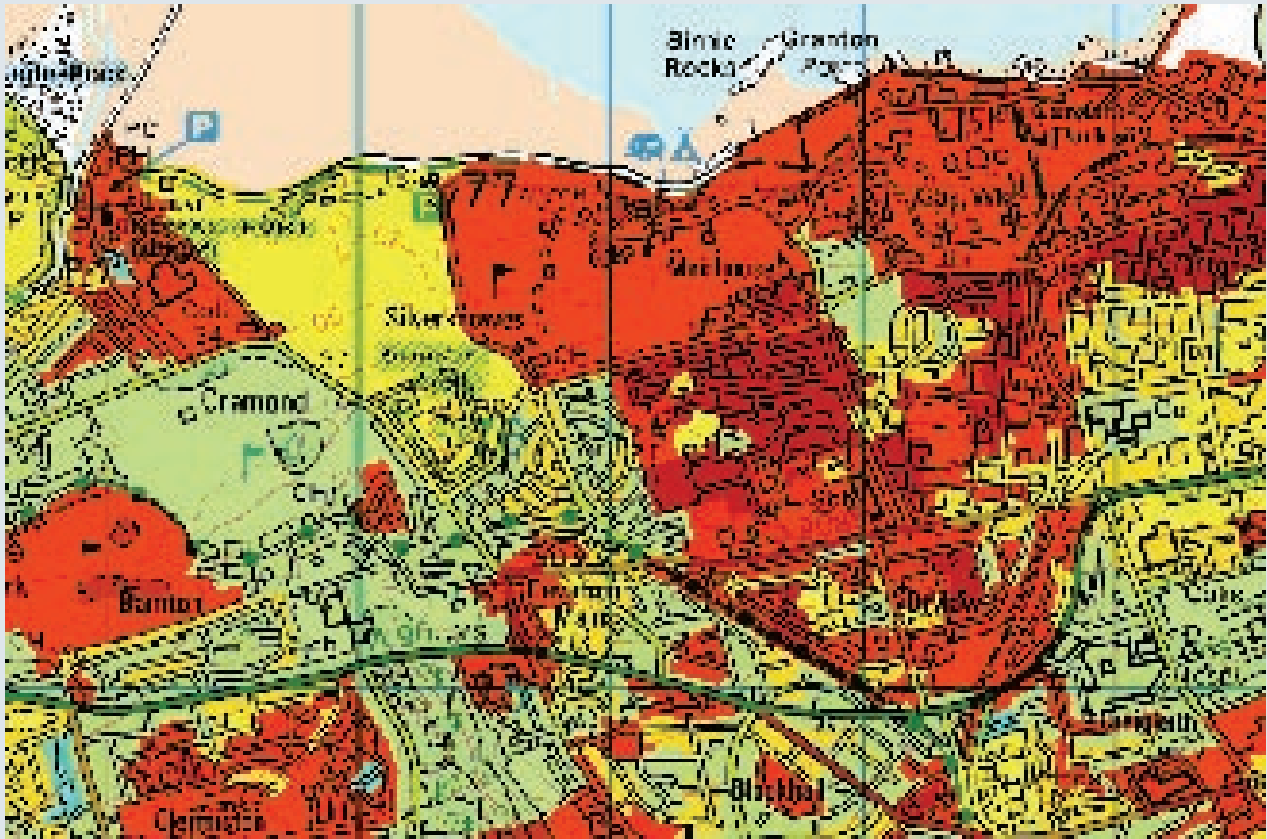
Key

- Well above national average risk of becoming a fatality in a house fire
- Above national average risk of becoming a fatality in a house fire
- National average risk of becoming a fatality in a house fire
- Below national average risk of becoming a fatality in a house fire
- Well below national average risk of becoming a fatality in a house fire

Source: Lothian and Borders

Exhibit 4
Examples of how FRAs are engaging with hard-to-reach groups

- Dumfries and Galloway has undertaken a series of targeted community safety events within day centres, bowling clubs and other community venues where older people congregate. This has allowed the FRA to deliver home safety advice directly to over 900 people.
- Grampian provides all operational fire crews with translation cards and has access to a 24-hour translation service to help communicate with people whose first language is not English.
- Strathclyde developed the ITS Initiative – Integration Through Safety – in Glasgow as a result of the increase in ethnic minority groups (particularly asylum seekers) within the city and in recognition that their often limited knowledge of English posed particular challenges. Through the production of a DVD, which can be used as an educational tool, this initiative seeks to examine and alleviate the problems faced by new communities with regards to home and fire safety.
- Tayside and the Princes Trust work closely with hard to reach young people within secondary schools through the xlerate and xl club programme and with young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) through the Team programme. This partnership promotes responsible citizenship and aims to reduce anti-social behaviour.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Exhibit 5
Number of home fire safety visits completed in 2005/06

In 2005/06, 3.9 per cent of households in Scotland received home fire safety visits, however, performance between FRAs has been variable.

FRA	Number of HFSVs completed	As a % of households in the FRA area
Central Scotland	150	0.1
Dumfries and Galloway	2,100	3.2
Fife	1,893	1.2
Grampian	304	0.1
Highlands and Islands	3,157	2.5
Lothian and Borders	72,000	17.8
Strathclyde	10,871	1.2
Tayside	145	0.8
Scotland	90,620	3.9

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Exhibit 6
Examples of FRAs working in partnership with community planning and other partners

- Central Scotland is working with NHS Forth Valley, Central Scotland Police and the Scottish Ambulance Service, developing proposals to share facilities on the site of the proposed new hospital in Larbert.
- Dumfries and Galloway worked with Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary to undertake joint police and fire service home safety checks, offering elderly residents home security and fire safety advice.
- Fife developed the 'Safe Drive Stay Alive' initiative with Fife Constabulary in 2002. It targets 16 to 24-year-olds, with the aim of improving road safety awareness in young people. The initiative is delivered as a roadshow to every fifth year pupil in Fife and has been attended by 3,500 pupils each year.
- Strathclyde employed a seconded social worker during 2004/05 who worked with local authority social work departments to ensure that fire risks are incorporated into the single shared assessments of need of elderly people.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

and community safety partners (Exhibit 6). An important element of this work is the active sharing of data between partners, for example, FRAs contribute information on location and numbers of different types of incidents, which when combined with information from other partners, such as crime figures from the police, enables detailed profiles of individual neighbourhoods to be developed to inform community safety priorities.

42. Two FRAs, Grampian and Strathclyde, have put in place an operational structure which is enabling closer working relationships with local authorities and other partner organisations. Command areas are coterminous with local authority boundaries to ensure that local initiatives are responsive to the needs of local communities. Dumfries and Galloway (a unitary authority) has put in place a new operational structure reflecting the four local community planning areas. District teams have been established to coordinate local community safety work and build relationships with local communities.

43. FRAs have also established partnerships with other bodies such as the Scottish Ambulance Service, local football clubs, local businesses, the Forestry Commission and marine coastguards. This type of partnership working supports the broader social agenda of improving public safety, crime reduction, social inclusion and community regeneration and resilience.

44. However, while FRAs are putting considerable resources into partnership working, some have not yet developed measures to evaluate the effectiveness of this work to ensure it is supporting their corporate aims. For example, only four FRAs have developed a formal partnership register. Without such an evaluation, FRAs are unable to assess whether each partnership is adding value. An example of good practice comes from Highlands and Islands which has developed an approach to evaluating its partnership activity based on a risk analysis linked to its strategic objectives (Exhibit 7, page 14).

45. FRAs must also continue to improve their approach to community

engagement if they are to liaise effectively with hard-to-reach groups. We found there was considerable potential for FRAs to learn from and share their experiences with community planning partners and to use the National Standards for Community Engagement. These standards are measurable performance statements which can be used by everyone involved in community engagement to improve their work with different communities. They set out the key principles and processes that underpin effective engagement and include practical measures against which to assess the effectiveness of community engagement. To date, only one FRA, Highlands and Islands, has formally sought to adopt these standards.

While local initiatives are delivering benefits, it is too soon to identify overall improvements in community safety

46. There is early evidence that progress is being made as a result of local initiatives to reduce fire risks to communities (Exhibit 8, page 15).

Exhibit 7
Highlands and Islands approach to partnership evaluation

A tool to assess the effectiveness of partnerships has been developed by Highlands and Islands in partnership with Northern Constabulary, through the Intelligence and Monitoring Group of the Highland Wellbeing Alliance. A 'productive partners' risk assessment form has been produced, which is designed to score partnerships against seven pre-determined criteria:

- Identification of the purpose and key objectives of the partnership.
- Links between the purpose and key objectives and the FRA's priorities or activities.
- Identification of resource costs required to run the partnership.
- Representation on the partnership.
- Impact of the agreed partnership objectives on the FRA's priorities or activities.
- Likelihood of successfully delivering agreed outcomes.
- Legal implications of forming the Partnership, ensuring this would maintain the FRA's and/or its partner's ability to meet their statutory duties.

Those with a low score are deemed high-risk partnerships and prioritised for a fuller qualitative evaluation, which will examine issues such as:

- rationale for partnership
- governance, performance and financial management
- risk management
- how the partnership serves the public.

This evaluation will inform a decision by the FRA to either look at ways of improving the partnership or to disengage from it.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Exhibit 8
Examples of local benefits from community safety activity

- Central Scotland identified that after the introduction of Fire Cadets Units, there was a coincident and significant decrease of 30 per cent in the number of secondary fire occurrences. There are now five separate units established with over 120 cadets ranging in age from 12 to18 years.

- Dumfries and Galloway has been working with young people through initiatives such as the Young Citizens Scheme which aims to divert people from anti-social behaviour whilst raising awareness of community safety issues. This work, coupled with the introduction of a call management policy, has seen the number of hoax calls reduce by 29 per cent in the 12 months between 2004/05 and 2005/06.

- Fife has a range of initiatives focused on youth engagement such as Operation Phoenix, a scheme targeted at bonfire incidents. In the year following the introduction of these initiatives (2005/06), the incidence of wilful fire-raising decreased by 33.8 per cent.

- Working through the Aberdeen City Community Planning Partnership Safer Homes Project, Grampian used FSEC data to identify two high risks neighbourhoods in Aberdeen City. Operational staff based in these neighbourhoods developed links with community groups and delivered community safety education and advice. Between 2004/05 and 2005/06 there was a 7.5 per cent reduction in dwelling fires and a 71 per cent reduction in casualties in these high risk areas.

- Highlands and Islands identified alcohol as a contributory factor in all fatal dwelling fires in 2004/05 and as a result launched an Alcohol Fire Death initiative. This was undertaken in partnership with the four Alcohol and Drug Action Teams in the FRA's area and involved developing public awareness of the increased risk of a dwelling fire following excessive alcohol consumption. In 2005/06, the year following the introduction of this initiative, there was a ten per cent drop in the number of accidental dwelling fires and a 28 per cent drop in incidents resulting in casualties.

- Lothian and Borders is involved in a range of initiatives with young people aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour. Over 100 youths who have shown challenging behaviour have successfully completed the FRA's intervention programme. During follow up evaluations over a period of months, two-thirds of participants were showing improved behaviour at home and in school.

- Strathclyde found that anti-social behaviour accounted for 51 per cent of all incidents attended by crews in East Renfrewshire and East Ayrshire during 2005. This issue is being tackled by the anti-social behaviour working groups within the two community planning partnership areas. There are early indications that this work is having a positive impact, as there has been a 40 per cent reduction in the number of malicious fire alarms during similar periods between 2005 and 2006.

- Working with Tayside Police, Tayside instigated joint patrols in the Hilltown area of Dundee, as data from FSEC had identified this as an area of high risk. In 2005/06, the year following the introduction of these joint patrols, fire-raising incidents were reduced by 46 per cent.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

47. At a national level, there is some evidence that the emphasis on prevention is delivering benefits, in particular:

- the number of people killed in domestic fires fell by 27 per cent, from 74 in 2004/05 to 54 in 2005/06

- the number of malicious calls reduced by eight per cent over the same period.

48. The Accounts Commission's Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) also identify slight reductions in the number of accidental fires per 10,000 of the population (Exhibit 9) and the number of incidents resulting in casualties per 10,000 of the population (Exhibit 10) since 2003/04, although this is variable across FRAs.

49. However, there is no clear pattern of improvement across Scotland in the first year of IRMP. Overall the number of incidents attended by FRAs between 2004/05 and 2005/06 rose by 3.7 per cent (from 108,478 to 112,450). The number of primary fires remained unchanged, while the number of road traffic collisions (RTCs) and secondary fires increased by 3.8 per cent and 14.7 per cent respectively. This is despite targeted safety initiatives such as Safe Drive Stay Alive and Risk Watch and the increasing amount of partnership working to improve community safety.

50. Reducing the number of RTCs is a continuing and complex challenge for Scotland and FRAs need to continue working with partners to address this. Historically, police forces have taken the lead in road safety. The recent legislative changes have increased FRAs involvement in the prevention of RTCs as well as providing a statutory basis for their traditional rescue role. FRAs are increasingly involved in local road safety initiatives and the

establishment of a strategic road safety forum by CFOA(S) will further promote this work.

51. Despite the increasing emphasis on prevention, delivering sustained reductions in fire risks to communities will take time and continued effort. FRAs are finding it difficult to assess the impact of their community fire safety activities. There is little systematic evaluation of community fire safety work and approaches to impact assessment often vary between different initiatives. Local community safety partnerships, often within the same FRA, use different methods of evaluation making it hard for the FRA to compare the relative merits of investing in different preventative activities.

Further work is required to implement Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act

52. In October 2006, Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act brought in new responsibilities for FRAs for fire risk inspection and enforcing compliance. The new legislation puts a statutory responsibility on property owners or managers for ensuring the safety of people in their workplaces or other non-domestic premises (such as residential care homes or houses of multiple occupation) in the event of a fire. FRAs are responsible for enforcing the new legislation and ensuring owners are adequately fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. This has implications both in knowing which premises within their area are subject to the new legislation and in establishing a new inspection framework.

53. As a result of this new legislation, there will be a considerable initial increase in the number of premises which need to be inspected but further work remains to assess the resource implications required to implement the legislation fully. Her

Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland (HMFSI) plans to carry out a review of progress in 2007.

Recommendations

- FRAs should ensure that HFSVs are rolled out on a more comprehensive basis and undertaken within the context of IRMP. Greater use should be made of retained personnel and training carried out on a more systematic basis.

- A more strategic approach to partnership working needs to be developed. FRAs need to make greater use of partnership registers and develop ways to evaluate individual partnerships to ensure they support their corporate aims and objectives. FRAs should also seek to use the National Standards for Community Engagement.

- FRAs need to do more to evaluate systematically the effectiveness of their community safety activities to ensure they are making optimum use of resources and contributing to objectives set out in their IRMPs and associated corporate plans. Through CFOA(S), FRAs should continue to work collaboratively to identify and share best practice.

Exhibit 9
Number of accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 population

There has been a slight reduction in the number of accidental dwelling fires across Scotland since 2003/04.

Legend:
- 2003/04
- 2004/05
- 2005/06

Y-axis: Number of incidents
X-axis: FRA

Categories: Scotland, Central Scotland, Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, Grampian, Highlands and Islands, Lothian and Borders, Strathclyde, Tayside
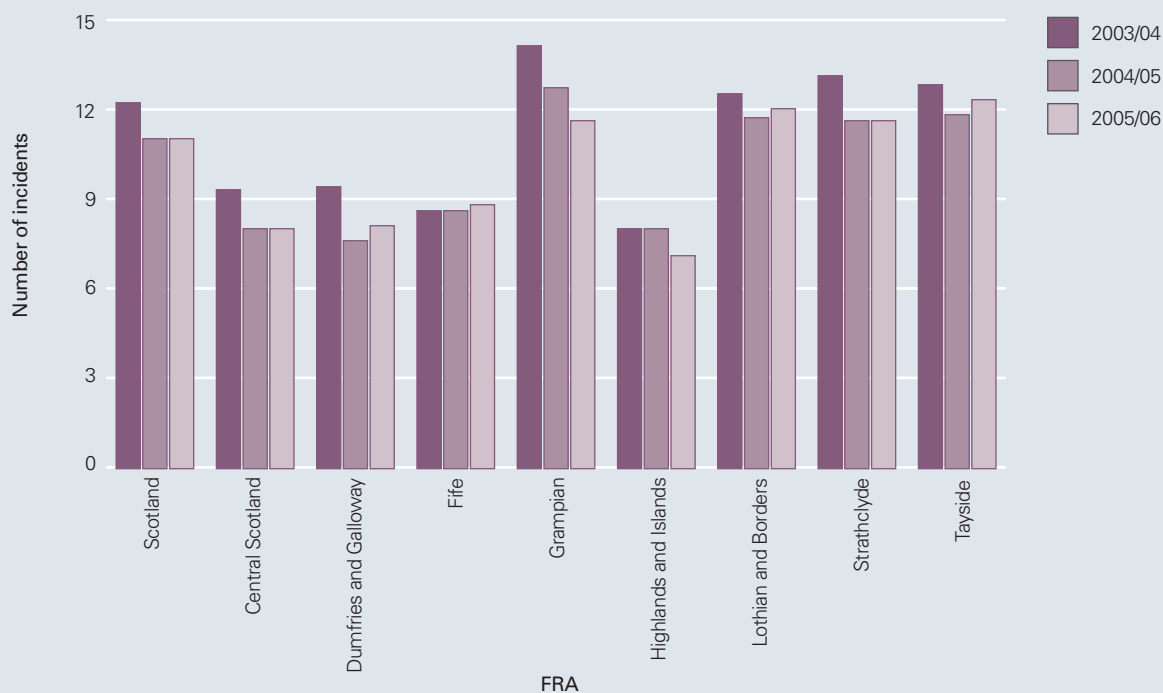
Source: Audit Scotland

Exhibit 10
Number of incidents resulting in casualties per 10,000 population

There has been a slight reduction in the number of incidents resulting in casualties across Scotland since 2003/04.

Legend:
- 2003/04
- 2004/05
- 2005/06

Y-axis: Number of incidents
X-axis: FRA

Categories: Scotland, Central Scotland, Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, Grampian, Highlands and Islands, Lothian and Borders, Strathclyde, Tayside
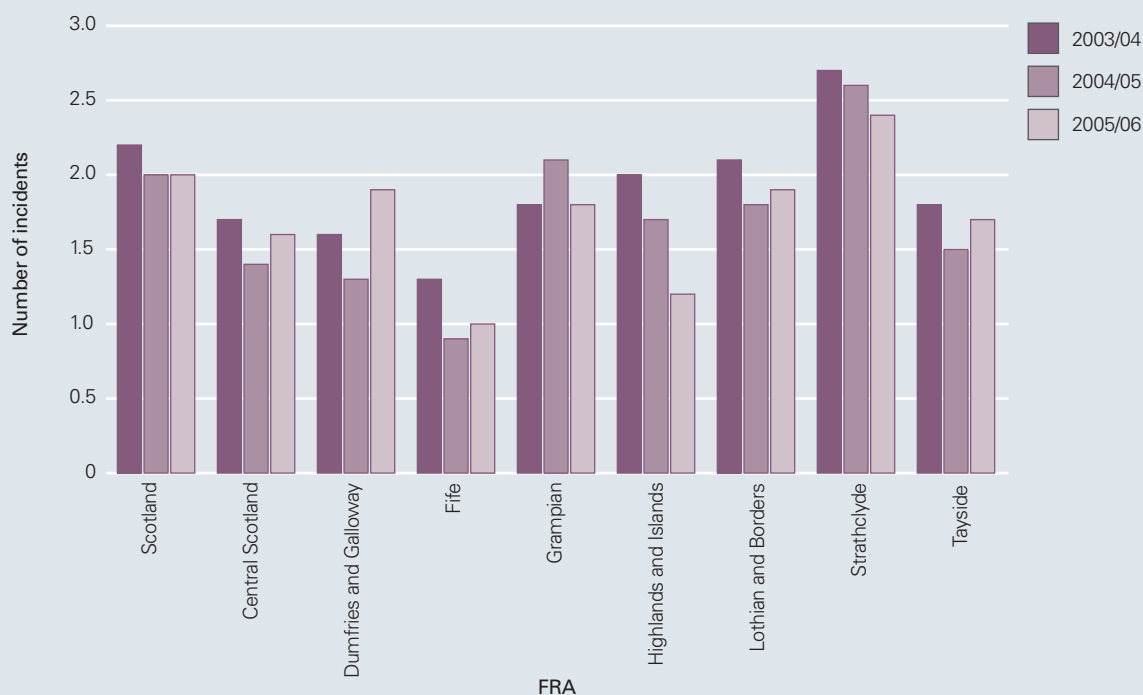
Source: Audit Scotland

Part 3. Leadership and governance
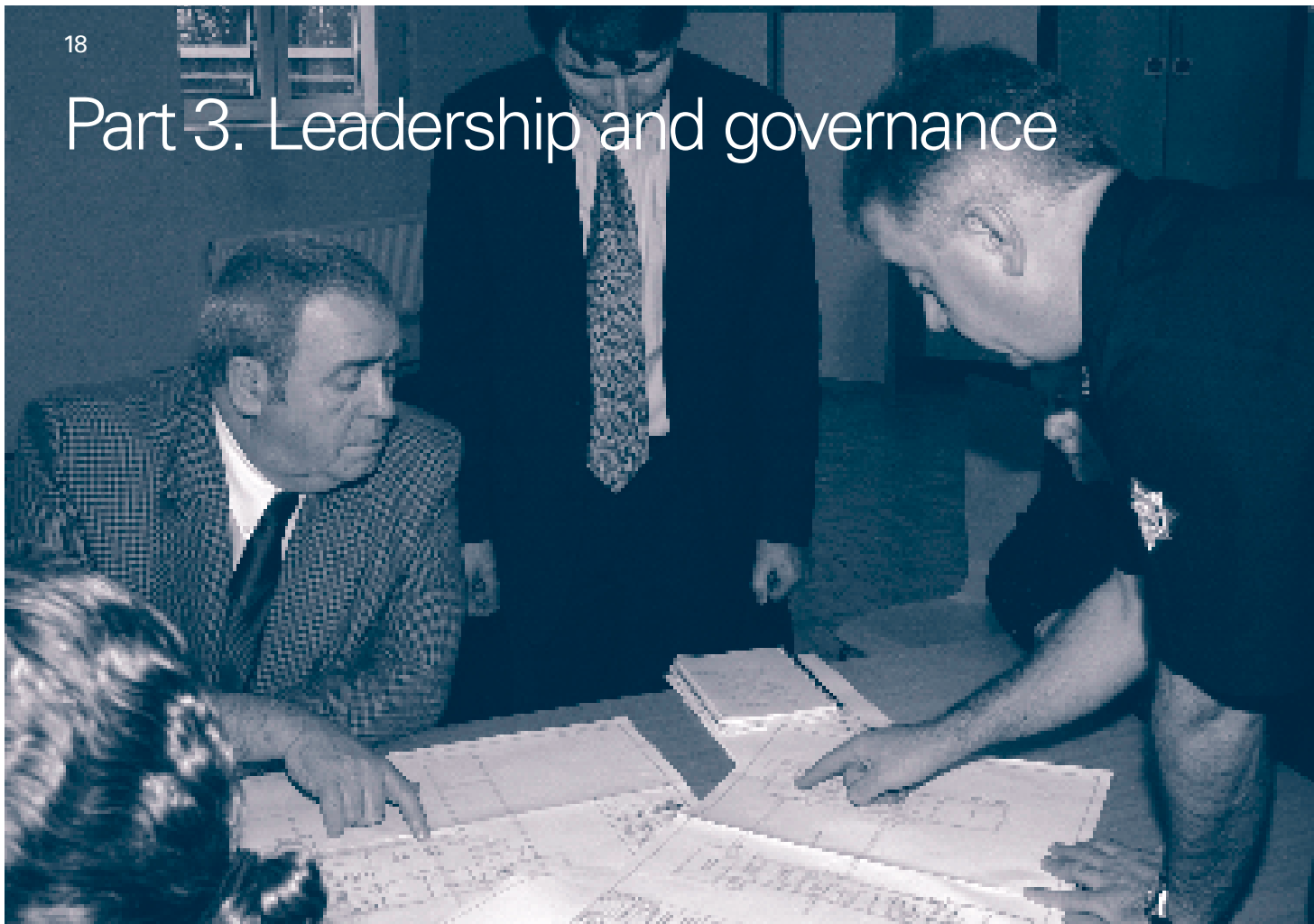
Key findings

- Elected members tend to play a subsidiary role in the strategic development of their FRA and are not meeting their statutory duties in relation to Best Value.

- There is limited support for elected members on joint fire and rescue boards or committees. Few FRAs have conducted a training needs analysis of elected members or introduced development programmes. The 2007 local government elections provide an opportunity for greater engagement of elected members.

- Senior management of FRAs demonstrate commitment to service reform.

Elected members actively support FRAs but can be too reliant on the views of the Chief Officer

54. We found elected members across all FRAs to be enthusiastic, committed and supportive. They demonstrate an awareness of the developing role of preventative work and are active locally, visiting fire stations and attending community safety events. There is evidence of good working relationships between members and officers, which has resulted in a common commitment to the service reform agenda across Scotland.

55. However, elected members tend to place considerable reliance on the views of the CO, without the level of challenge that might be expected in a modern local authority. There is a balance to be struck between elected members recognising the professional advice provided by the CO, while undertaking robust and effective scrutiny of policy decisions and performance.

Elected members on FRAs are not meeting their statutory duties in relation to Best Value

56. The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 introduced statutory duties relating to Best Value and community planning. The scope of this is very broad but in general terms a successful authority will:

- work with its partners to identify a clear set of priorities that respond to the needs of the community in both the short and the longer term

- be organised to deliver those priorities

- meet and clearly demonstrate that it is meeting the community's needs

- operate in a way that drives continuous improvement in all its activities.

57. These duties apply to all local authorities, including councils, police and fire authorities. An authority which secures Best Value in relation to 'commitment and leadership', one of the ten Best Value criteria, should be able to demonstrate:

- a commitment to delivering better public services year on year through Best Value, and an

acceptance of the key principles of accountability, ownership, continuous improvement and transparency

- a clear vision of how Best Value contributes to corporate goals, which inform the direction of services and are communicated effectively to staff

- a commitment to high standards of probity and propriety, to honour the trust given by the electorate.

58. Best Value is less well developed among FRAs than in councils. Elected members should be at the heart of the decision-making process in their FRA, agreeing the political priorities for the service and setting standards against which performance improvement can be measured. However, in most authorities we found elected members were insufficiently involved in setting the strategic direction and there was a lack of effective performance reporting through which performance issues could be identified, monitored and addressed.

59. There is a clear pattern of FRAs being led by their senior officers, with members playing a subsidiary role much of the time. For example, members typically had little or no involvement in Best Value service reviews, leaving officers to determine their scope and assess their findings.

60. One effective way of promoting the engagement of elected members is through the use of 'champions', where an elected member becomes the FRA's champion for specific issues related to service reform, for example equality and diversity or IRMP. This approach has a number of benefits, in particular:

- it builds on members' own expertise and interests

- it reduces the workload of members, allowing them to divide up responsibility for specific areas, rather than everyone having to be interested in everything

- it increases members' involvement with particular areas of strategic policy work within the FRA.

61. This approach has been found to be successful in England in promoting elected member engagement. Only a few FRAs in Scotland are currently developing this approach. It is most advanced in Highlands and Islands which has instituted champions for training and development, fairness and equality, and community engagement. The role of these members is to increase knowledge and understanding of their 'championed' issue within the board, and to act as a point of contact for senior officers and the CO. In Central Scotland, an elected member has become the Joint Board's champion for diversity and equality issues, whilst in Strathclyde, a role is currently being developed for a risk-management champion.

Aspects of FRAs' governance structures pre-date IRMP and require updating

62. A few FRAs have set up new committees or member/officer working groups to meet the needs of service reform. For example, Tayside and Central Scotland have member/officer working groups on IRMP, and Grampian has established a new sub-committee specifically to address policy issues related to service reform. However, in most FRAs political structures have only been slightly modified to reflect service reform, existing arrangements usually pre-date the introduction of IRMP and could usefully be updated.

63. The local government elections in May 2007 present FRAs and elected

members with an opportunity for reviewing current arrangements and presenting proposals to newly appointed members.

There is limited training for elected members serving FRAs

64. The majority of fire and rescue elected members are experienced councillors, but serving on a fire authority presents challenges that a member's background as councillor may not automatically equip them for. The May 2007 elections are also likely to bring an intake of members with little or no previous experience of being a councillor and of councillors who have not served on a FRA before. While the Improvement Service is working with COSLA on developing an induction pack for elected members after the election, this will relate primarily to their duties in relation to councils.

65. FRAs tend to rely on constituent authorities for member induction and development. Training is largely generic, not relevant to members' specific responsibilities on fire and rescue joint boards or relevant council committees, and rarely covers issues pertinent to fire and rescue services or related to service reform.

66. Many elected members we interviewed were unaware of the need for specific training by the FRA to assist them to fulfill their role as members of a fire and rescue joint board more effectively. Addressing any training needs and recognising the specialist skills that members bring to their roles is important in promoting effective engagement of members and realising their full potential for the benefit of their FRA. However, only a few FRAs have undertaken any analysis of their elected members training needs. Exhibit 11 (overleaf) shows how Highlands and Islands is developing this area.

Exhibit 11
Highlands and Islands – elected members' learning and development strategy

Highlands and Islands undertook a learning needs analysis in May 2006 which gave elected members the opportunity to identify areas where they would benefit from training. The findings from the analysis have been used to inform a formal learning and development strategy, which is supporting members in discharging their role on the Fire Board to provide leadership and scrutinise performance.

The strategy is designed to encourage members to participate in a range of development activities such as induction, knowledge acquisition, coaching and mentoring, and attending approved events such as conferences. The FRA has also introduced role maps for members in important areas of service delivery such as IRMP. For example, the strategic objective to 'develop effective working partnerships to plan, deliver and monitor an effective fire and rescue service' is accompanied by the following specific actions for members:

- Determine and prioritise the potential partnership arrangements which may assist with planning, delivery and monitoring.
- Promote the service to key stakeholders and those with interests in order to establish and extend effective working relationships.
- Encourage community leaders to participate constructively in consultative arrangements for service provision.
- Explore and prioritise risks within the community and the related need for range and type of service availability.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

67. There is also a lack of administrative resources to support elected members in carrying out their role. Elected members on joint boards rely heavily on the resources of the FRA for information and analysis. Few FRAs have invested in additional support to assist members in their scrutiny role. Falkirk Council has recently appointed an additional officer who provides support to the Fire and Rescue and Police Joint Boards in Central Scotland.

Senior management of FRAs demonstrate commitment to service reform

68. FRAs can be broadly characterised as officer-led organisations and the CO is a key driver to delivering national priorities and service reform. We found a strong commitment to the service reform agenda across all senior management teams in Scotland. This has enabled the FRAs to develop and articulate clear strategic visions for the communities they serve, with particular emphasis on the themes of community safety and partnership working.

69. Senior management teams have worked hard to build constructive working relationships with elected members, which has helped build commitment by members and officers to the service reform agenda. They have taken a similar approach to liaising with staff representative organisations but many still need to develop formal partnership forums with the full range of unions.

70. Many FRAs have restructured their organisations to meet the needs of service reform. The focus of these structural changes has been either to reflect local community planning arrangements (as in Strathclyde and Grampian) or to bring together operational and community safety functions (as in Tayside and Fife).

Recommendations

Prior to and following the local elections in May 2007:

- Elected members on FRAs should ensure they are effectively meeting all their statutory duties in relation to Best Value.

- FRAs should explore the potential for elected members to champion specific issues or initiatives related to service reform.

- FRAs should support elected members in ensuring that board and committee structures effectively meet the changing focus of fire and rescue services.

- FRAs should prepare and conduct a training needs analysis of elected members and use the opportunity provided by the 2007 local elections to introduce a development programme for members and consider whether improved administrative support for members may assist them in discharging their duties.

Part 4. Financial and performance management

Key findings

- FRAs have made progress in delivering efficiency savings. However, they need to explore the potential for further savings in order to continue reforming their services within existing resources.

- Progress on performance management has been variable. Further work is required in most FRAs to develop comprehensive performance management frameworks to enable them to assess progress against their strategic objectives and build a culture of continuous improvement.

- Public performance reporting is generally underdeveloped and more work is required to satisfy the requirements of Section 13 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Financial context

71. FRAs in Scotland spent a total of about £300 million in 2005/06. The Scottish Executive sets the overall level of funding, which is distributed between FRAs through Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE). Historically, GAE has been based on the resources required by each fire service to meet the recommended national standards of fire cover for different types of property.

72. The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 removed these national standards, and FRAs are now expected to set their own standards within the context of their IRMP. The Scottish Executive is currently reviewing the GAE formula, so that funding arrangements are more directly related to the needs of FRAs, as identified through their IRMP. Until this review is completed, the GAE formula remains based on historical requirements.

73. Although the GAE formula sets the overall level of funding and its distribution, each FRA is responsible for agreeing its own budget for the provision of fire and rescue services in their area. Most FRAs agree budgets which fall within the GAE formula, although Highlands and Islands are funded above GAE and Fife and Central Scotland below.

74. The geographic and organisational differences between the eight FRAs in Scotland discussed in Part 1 lead to significant differences in expenditure (Exhibit 12, overleaf).

75. Much of the variation of the costs per head of population identified in Exhibit 12 arises from the increase in costs associated with delivering services in sparsely populated areas like Highlands and Islands and Dumfries and Galloway. In addition, because the distribution of funding is historically based, it does not reflect more recent population changes in the last 10-15 years, for example increases in population in Aberdeen and decreases in Dundee. Similar factors will affect costs per incident. However, average costs of incidents will also be affected by economies of scale, with the two largest FRAs, Strathclyde and Lothian and Borders, having the lowest costs.

76. Over recent years, FRAs have been successful in attracting additional funding from a variety

Exhibit 12
Analysis of FRA expenditure 2005/06

There is significant variation in the expenditure of FRAs across Scotland.

FRA	Net expenditure 2005/06 (£000)	Population	Total number of incidents attended	Cost per head of population (£)	Average cost per incident (£)
Central Scotland	15,390	282,070	4,996	54.56	3,080
Dumfries and Galloway	9,643	147,930	1,906	65.19	5,059
Fife	23,900	354,600	6,586	67.40	3,629
Grampian	24,523	524,020	8,023	46.80	3,057
Highlands and Islands	22,583	279,040	5,273	80.93	4,283
Lothian and Borders	45,769	896,970	21,139	51.03	2,165
Strathclyde	134,244	2,205,820	56,330	60.86	2,383
Tayside	25,874	387,950	8,197	66.69	3,157
Scotland	301,926	5,078,400	112,450	59.45	2,685

Source: Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland and Audit Scotland fieldwork

of external sources, including the Scottish Executive and community planning partnerships, to help finance the delivery of community fire safety activities. However, these injections of funding are usually short term and FRAs need to consider longer term financial arrangements to support the increasing volume of prevention work. Short-term initiative funding also impacts on long-range planning, and means that many initiatives and marketing campaigns can only be planned annually.

77. In addition to GAE, the Scottish Executive provided approximately £47 million through transitional funding over the period 2004/05 to 2007/08 (Exhibit 13). This was provided to assist FRAs to meet the costs of the NJC agreement, in particular in relation to increases in employee costs for wholetime and control staff, pay parity for retained firefighters and increased pension costs.

78. Transitional funding has not been treated as a separate funding stream but has been added to the other resources available in setting annual budgets. Some elements

of transitional funding will be incorporated into GAE from 2008/09, in particular costs relating to retained staff. However, the transitional funding relating to wholetime employee costs was provided on a decreasing scale, and FRAs were expected to be able to meet the full costs for increases in the pay of wholetime firefighters by the end of the four years through efficiency savings.

FRAs are making efficiency savings but need to continue their efforts

79. All FRAs have made some efficiency gains (Exhibit 14), and most will be able to absorb the end of transitional funding within their revenue budgets from 2008/09. Only two, Highlands and Islands and Strathclyde, are planning to use some of their reserves to support the reduction in transitional funding.

80. Efficiencies have been realised through a wide range of measures, including the introduction of new equipment, such as aerial ladder pumps (which combine facilities on one appliance which previously

needed two) and changing approaches to the deployment of staff, for example through the use of pre-planned overtime.

81. A major contribution to efficiency improvements has been through the implementation of policies in relation to automatic fire alarms (AFAs). Historically, FRAs provided a full emergency response to all these alarm activations, typically two or three appliances depending on the type of property. However, since 2004, all FRAs except Strathclyde have developed policies to reduce attendance at AFAs. Strathclyde has chosen instead to concentrate their efforts on identifying and targeting the worst offenders.

82. FRAs which have implemented AFA policies have seen a reduction of up to 20 per cent in the number of appliance mobilisations, reducing health and safety risks for firefighters and liberating resources for further community safety work.

83. There is potential for FRAs to achieve further efficiencies by reducing the incidence of AFAs.

Exhibit 13
Transitional funding received for 2004/05 to 2007/08

The Scottish Executive provided £47 million through transitional funding.

FRA	Transitional funding (£000)
Central Scotland	1,654
Dumfries and Galloway	1,504
Fife	3,076
Grampian	3,525
Highlands and Islands[1]	16,143
Lothian and Borders	5,130
Strathclyde	13,153
Tayside	2,956
Scotland	47,141

Note:
1 Highlands and Islands received additional transitional funding following Scottish Executive agreement to fund the upgrade of 61 auxiliary stations to retained status.

Source: Scottish Executive

Exhibit 14
Examples of efficiency gains identified by FRAs

- Lothian and Borders' 2006/07 budget identified £0.65 million cashable savings primarily from reductions in expenditure for retained personnel and a reduction in establishment of 16 posts.
- Strathclyde's 2006/07 budget includes a reduction of 36 posts from Road Rescue Units and other amendments to service delivery as outlined in the IRMP, resulting in a cashable saving of £1.149 million.
- Through the introduction of Rescue Pumps, Tayside has identified a cashable saving of £92,065.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Exhibit 15
The proportion of incidents attended which were false alarms as a result of faulty apparatus

False alarms as a result of faulty apparatus reduced by 2% between 2004/05 and 2005/06, but this remains an area with potential for further improvements.
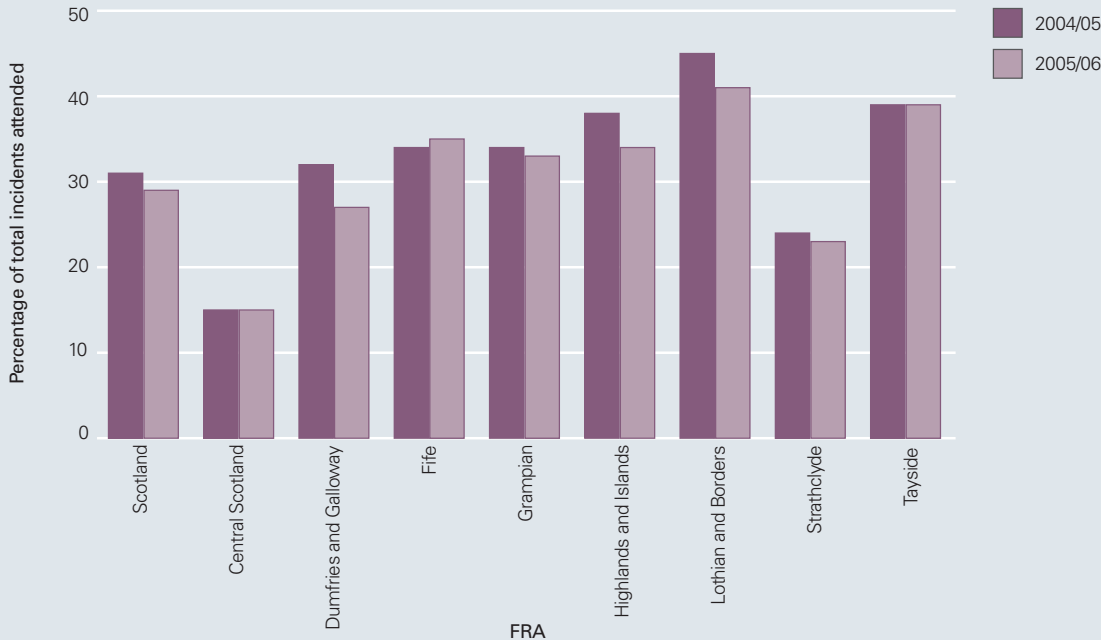
Source: Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland and Audit Scotland fieldwork

In 2005/06, 29 per cent of all incidents responded to by FRAs were the result of false alarms arising from faulty equipment, although this varies across Scotland (Exhibit 15). While some FRAs are beginning to look at ways of reducing these numbers, for example through targeting repeat offenders, further work in this area could deliver significant savings.

84. FRAs are also increasingly working together to gain economies of scale. In particular, four FRAs (Lothian and Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Central Scotland and Fife) have joined together as the South-East Collaboration Group (SECG) to deliver a range of shared policies and procedures which are designed to yield more benefits than if each FRA worked separately. Working groups have now been established to review and examine arrangements for health and safety audit and support arrangements, specialist HR support, specialist training (including driver training), staff development and procurement.

FRAs are improving their financial management but further work is required

85. The Accounts Commission's second report on the progress of modernisation identified a need for FRAs to improve the links between budget setting and the key elements of service reform, in particular their IRMP. FRAs have made progress in this area, and we found more evidence of costed action plans and better integration between service planning and budget setting. Further work is required in relation to asset management. Most FRAs have yet to develop corporate asset management plans and none were able to demonstrate how their asset portfolio is supporting their strategic objectives.

86. FRAs need to make further progress in demonstrating efficient use of resources and understanding the costs of different activities. There are few financial performance indicators developed for fire and rescue services and limited financial benchmarking between authorities.

Performance management is improving but more needs to be done in most authorities

87. Historically, performance management has been underdeveloped in FRAs. A comprehensive performance management framework is important in enabling FRAs to deliver service reform and in building a culture of continuous improvement. It provides the mechanism for FRAs to understand how the organisation is delivering against agreed priorities and to monitor the success of new initiatives.

88. Three FRAs, Highlands and Islands, Lothian and Borders and Tayside, have developed comprehensive performance management frameworks which are starting to drive a performance culture throughout the organisation. Developing an appropriate organisational culture is crucial to making performance management effective and ensuring that the most is achieved from any framework (Exhibit 16).

Exhibit 16
How Lothian and Borders is developing a culture of measuring and managing performance

Performance management arrangements in Lothian and Borders include performance of both individual stations and support services and feed information up through the organisation. The FRA has two main performance management systems – the Unit Plan Workbooks and the Initiative System. In the Unit Plans, service delivery managers in individual stations are responsible for routine performance monitoring. For each station watch, performance is reported against a set of measures in areas such as operational risk assessment, service planning and absence management on a four-point scale (high standard, satisfactory, below expected standard, unsatisfactory).

The separate Initiative System, based on the performance approach in use at West Lothian Council, collates information on all the separate initiatives undertaken by the FRA, both those connected with the implementation of the Service Improvement Plan and other local initiatives. All managers, including those on stations, use the Initiative System to record and manage service planning objectives and local initiatives based in their own area's risk profile. The system provides a facility where all initiatives can be viewed across the organisation and has the potential to improve the sharing of information and good practice between different stations.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

FRAs gather a lot of information on activities, inputs and outputs, but this is not used in a structured way to manage performance

89. Until recently, most FRAs tended to rely primarily on Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) for their performance information. However, over the last couple of years CFOA(S) has developed a suite of Local Performance Indicators (LPIs) which allow FRAs in Scotland to benchmark their performance against each other. These indicators measure performance in areas such as fire prevention, the diversity of the workforce, attacks on fire fighters and Freedom of Information requests. A new suite of LPIs was introduced on 1 April 2006, so at present no annual comparable data is available. Both the SPIs and the LPIs are listed in Appendix 1.

90. While SPIs and LPIs provide a lot of useful performance information for individual FRAs they do not provide a comprehensive picture of overall performance. In particular, they are not designed to assess each individual FRA's performance against the critical success factors as laid out in a service plan and/or IRMP.

91. We also found that within most FRAs, individual departments routinely collect volumes of detailed data on activity and the performance of specific services or functions. However, this information is not generally presented in a coherent, consistent manner that allows accessible management information on the performance of the organisation to be provided to the senior management team.

92. FRAs have been slow in developing internal performance indicators reflecting the specific objectives of the FRA. However, work has started to progress in this area (Exhibit 17, overleaf).

93. All FRAs need to improve their information technology (IT) systems to underpin performance management arrangements. CFOA(S) is currently exploring the procurement of a national performance information framework.

94. As a result of the slow development of performance management and performance indicators, it is often difficult for FRA senior management and boards or committees, as well as the general public, to gauge the progress or performance of their own FRA against objectives outlined in service plans or IRMPs.

Public performance reporting is generally underdeveloped

95. Section 13 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 imposes a duty on FRAs to make arrangements for reporting to the public on outcomes of their performance.

96. While all FRAs, with the exception of Grampian,[3] publish performance reports, these

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3   Grampian make statutory performance information available on their website.

Exhibit 17
Performance management in Tayside

Tayside has developed a set of performance indicators to measure progress in implementing its five-year strategies. For example, the people strategy includes an objective to 'develop a highly skilled workforce to meet the needs of communities through continuous learning and development' which has four performance measures to assess progress:

– % of employees competent in their role
– % of employees receiving satisfactory appraisals
– % of employees receiving continuing professional development payments
– Number of employees receiving education support grants.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

documents tend to contain large amounts of contextual information and data on activity levels, such as type of incidents, but relatively limited information on the overall performance of the service against its strategic objectives. There is limited consideration of the differing needs of stakeholders, including access and equalities issues.

97. While many FRAs produce trend information, for example on how performance is changing over time, there is little if any comparative information provided. The development through CFOA(S) of the LPIs should ensure that all FRAs are able to present some comparative information for public performance reporting (PPR) purposes.

98. The development of internal performance indicators and increasingly robust performance management frameworks should assist in developing a more comprehensive approach to PPR, with a direct link to the strategic objectives of each FRA. For example, Highlands and Islands and Tayside, who have made progress on

performance management, both publish Public Performance Reports which report on progress against the actions in their service plans.

Recommendations

- FRAs should continue their efforts to improve the efficient use of resources (including taking action to reduce the number of AFAs) and take account of the ongoing financial implications of service reform.

- FRAs should develop comprehensive performance management frameworks, including the development of local performance indicators, to assess progress against their strategic objectives and build a culture of continuous improvement.

- FRAs should review their approach to public performance reporting to ensure it satisfies the requirements of Section 13 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Part 5. Workforce management

Key findings

- Good progress has been made in implementing the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) for wholetime operational staff. The implementation of IPDS to retained and volunteer firefighters has been slower, and needs to improve.

- Equity of access to training is variable among non-uniformed staff, and more needs to be done to identify their training needs systematically. FRAs could make greater use of multi-tier entry.

- FRAs have introduced a number of flexible working policies, but there is a need for further progress if the objectives of service reform are to be achieved.

- Across all FRAs, absence management has improved over the last 12 months.

- Personal appraisal systems are underdeveloped in the majority of FRAs.

FRAs have made good progress in implementing IPDS for wholetime operational staff

99. The Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) is an overarching development strategy intended to encompass all fire and rescue service staff at every stage in their career. It aims to enable staff to reach and maintain the level of competence required to fulfil their role as outlined in National Occupational Standards. Implementation of IPDS was one of the elements of the NJC agreement, and is intended to provide continuing professional development that matches the training needs of individuals to service requirements. Training in the fire and rescue service is essential to the maintenance of a safe and effective operational response to incidents.

100. A national approach to the implementation of IPDS was adopted in Scotland, coordinated by the Scottish Fire Services College. A partnership between the eight FRAs, the College and the Scottish Qualifications Authority has enabled IPDS to be taken forward on a consistent basis across all authorities.

101. The development work to date on IPDS has been designed for operational employees. The Firefighter Development Programme (FFDP) was launched in June 2005 and provides firefighters with a needs-driven personalised training and development plan. The Supervisory Management Programme was launched in August 2006, and will provide a similar development framework for watch and crew managers. Individuals' progress against the development programmes is recorded using an electronic personal development records system (PDRpro).

102. Across Scotland, good progress has been made implementing IPDS for wholetime staff (49 per cent of the workforce), and the FFDP and PDRpro are being used in all wholetime stations.

103. While the objectives of IPDS are sound and it provides a framework for continuing professional development, there is considerable

Exhibit 18
Workforce profile as at March 2006

Operational firefighters account for 88% of the workforce, non-uniformed staff 10% and control room staff 2%.

FRA	Wholetime	Retained	Volunteer	Control room staff	Non-uniformed
Central Scotland	244	161	10	17	43
Dumfries and Galloway	107	210	8	17	22
Fife	392	104	0	21	35
Grampian	325	428	27	30	89
Highlands and Islands	133	1070	141	18	55
Lothian and Borders	742	299	0	29	163
Strathclyde	2211	584	268	69	439
Tayside	410	246	25	22	77
Scotland	4564	3102	479	223	923

Source: Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland and Audit Scotland fieldwork

concern among both senior staff and operational firefighters about the bureaucratic nature of the system which creates a significant administrative burden, both for FRA HR departments and individual firefighters.

104. There is also a concern that the system does not give enough emphasis to the practical nature of some operational training. A large number of experienced firefighters, who currently provide practical support to younger recruits, will be retiring in the next few years. This, together with the expected reduction in the number of incidents, presents a further challenge for FRAs in ensuring firefighters are properly trained to meet operational requirements. This is challenging both for FRAs, who are responsible for in-house training, and for the Scottish Executive through their central funding of the Scottish Fire Service College at Gullane. CFOA(S) together with the Scottish Executive may wish to consider the extent to which these issues are reflected in

the implementation of the recent learning and development strategy for Scotland.[4]

Training and support for retained and volunteer staff needs to improve

105. Much of the fire and rescue service in Scotland is provided by retained and volunteer staff, who comprise 39 per cent of the total workforce (Exhibit 18). These firefighters provide an efficient and highly cost-effective resource for fire and rescue services across Scotland.

106. It is a challenge for FRAs to ensure their retained and volunteer staff receive adequate training in the limited time available. The NJC agreement resulted in retained staff having more structured contracts and formalised arrangements for their training and availability for work. Retained and volunteer staff receive training for two to three hours, one evening a week. Progress in rolling out IPDS and PDRpro to retained and volunteer staff has been much

slower and needs to improve. The lack of adequate IT facilities in many retained and volunteer stations has been one of the main reasons for this. However, all FRAs now have plans to improve their IT infrastructure in retained and volunteer stations and the increased access to IT, and with it PDRpro, should speed up the implementation of IPDS for this group of staff. Exhibit 19 illustrates the rate of progress of implementing key elements of IPDS across Scotland both in the wholetime and retained sector.

Access to training and development for non-uniformed staff is variable

107. Currently, non-uniformed staff comprise ten per cent of the FRA workforce. This is set to increase as FRAs recognise the skills, knowledge and experience that professionals can bring to the service, for example in HR, equality and diversity or IT. As the recruitment of people with specialist support skills increases, the introduction of a training and

4   *Scottish Fire and Rescue Services: Learning and Development Strategy,* Scottish Executive and Chief Fire Officers Association (Scotland), January 2007.

Exhibit 19
Progress made by FRAs in the implementation of IPDS

Variable progress has been made in implementing the two main components of IPDS to wholetime and retained staff.

FRA	Implementation of the Firefighter Development Programme		Roll out of PDRpro	
	Wholetime	Retained	Wholetime	Retained
Central Scotland	√	X	√	√
Dumfries and Galloway	√	√	√	X
Fife	√	X	√	√
Grampian	√	√	√	X
Highlands and Islands	√	X	√	X
Lothian and Borders	√	√	√	X
Strathclyde	√	√	√	X
Tayside	√	√	√	√

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

development structure for non-uniformed staff needs to become an increasing priority for FRAs.

108. While IPDS is intended for all fire and rescue staff, all the development work to date has been designed for operational employees rather than non-uniformed staff. Training needs analysis and development frameworks are limited, and there is no clear career structure for non-uniformed staff. Non-uniformed staff in the two unitary authorities (Dumfries and Galloway and Fife) benefit from being council employees and have access to a wider range of training facilities and increased career development opportunities than in some of the other FRAs. Only Strathclyde has a formal development programme for non-uniformed staff. In general, FRAs need to do more to identify the training needs of their non-uniform staff on a systematic basis.

109. FRAs could also make greater use of multi-tier entry to increase the diversity of middle and senior management. Appointing individuals with backgrounds and experience

from outside operational firefighting is cost-effective and will complement and enhance their existing skills base. Lothian and Borders has made the most progress in this area, with eight (40 per cent) of its 20 functional management posts and three (20 per cent) of its senior management posts being held by directly recruited non-uniformed staff. Other FRAs are starting to make progress in this area: Central Scotland for example recently recruited a non-uniformed Director of Service Support and has created two non-uniformed functional manager posts, while Strathclyde recruited an HR Director in 2004 with a local authority background to the post of Assistant Chief Officer.

Personal appraisal systems are underdeveloped in the majority of FRAs

110. Across Scotland, there is a lack of personal appraisal systems to enable FRAs to monitor and manage the performance of individuals, linked to the objectives of the service. National guidance is currently being developed on this

and it is an area in which individual FRAs need to make progress.

111. The need for a personal appraisal system, linked to IPDS and to FRAs' performance management frameworks was identified in the Accounts Commission's second report on the progress of modernisation.

112. Some FRAs have made progress in this area. For example, Strathclyde has developed a traffic light system where firefighters need to achieve a 'green light' to progress from different stages in the development programme, and those that score red receive additional support. Dumfries and Galloway operates the Assessment Development Interview (ADI) System to assess the performance and development needs of all roles and grades of staff. The system not only identifies individual training needs but also looks at the needs of the service. This allows resources to be targeted appropriately in line with strategic plans.

Exhibit 20
The move from rank to role

The old ranks have been mapped to the following roles:

Rank	Role
Firefighter	Firefighter
Leading firefighter	Crew manager
Sub officer	Watch manager
Station officer	Watch manager or station manager
Assistant divisional officer	Station manager or group manager
Divisional officer II and III	Group manager
Divisional officer I	Area manager
Senior divisional officer	Area manager

Source: NJC Circular 13/03

The majority of FRAs have completed the transition from rank to role

113. As part of the NJC agreement on pay and conditions, the ranks that existed within fire brigades were replaced with roles (Exhibit 20). The transition from rank to role has been completed in all FRAs except Grampian who still need to match staff to watch and crew manager roles, and consider any appeals if necessary.

114. One of the major changes in the move from rank to role is the inclusion of staff management as a task for the new watch and station managers, who previously only managed operational incidents. Taking responsibility for staff and managing budgets is a major cultural change for many long-serving firefighters and is proving challenging in some areas. FRAs need to continue to work with these new managers to support them in their new roles and ensure they have the necessary skills.

115. All FRAs are encouraging and supporting staff, in particular those at middle management, to take further education or other appropriate courses as part of a general drive to increase the skills base within their organisation. For example, Tayside has encouraged managers and heads of department to attend a 'Leading an empowered organisation' course run by Leeds University. This four-day course explores the benefits of decentralisation and empowerment and equips managers with practical skills they can use on a daily basis. To date, 124 staff have been on this course, which is 79 per cent of all the FRA's managers.

FRAs have introduced a number of flexible working policies, but there is a need for further progress

116. The NJC agreement provided for part-time working for all employees in the fire and rescue service, which was a new flexibility for operational firefighters. It was intended to improve working conditions for staff and promote greater diversity, while boosting service efficiency.

117. We found that the majority of FRAs have introduced flexible working polices and progress has been made in some areas, in particular in training and development (Exhibit 21, page 32).

118. FRAs are also making greater use of pre-planned overtime for wholetime firefighters which provides greater flexibility and overall a more efficient use of resources. Progress on mixed crewing (ie, wholetime and retained staff working together on appliances) and retained contracts for wholetime firefighters is more patchy across Scotland. Furthermore, the take-up of these policies has been very limited to date. The greatest take-up has been in Lothian and Borders but even here only 20 wholetime firefighters (three per cent of the total wholetime workforce) have retained contracts. FRAs need to do more to highlight the benefits these policies can offer to individuals and to the service.

119. All FRAs are continuing to use the traditional watch and shift systems for the majority of wholetime operational staff (the

2-2-4 system). Only one FRA, Lothian and Borders, has introduced a new duty system which will be implemented in a phased approach at four stations. The new system will allow wholetime crews to staff these stations during the day whilst retained crews will be deployed at night and weekends. While the traditional system provides benefits to staff, this is an area which FRAs are going to have to tackle at some stage, to achieve more flexibility in the use of resources in the future.

120. All FRAs offer options such as part-time working, flexi-time, staggered hours and job sharing to their non-unformed staff.

121. Over the next few years, the significant number of firefighters retiring presents a unique opportunity for FRAs to review their deployment of staff and to introduce more flexible ways of working to enable them to meet service requirements with optimum efficiency. FRAs should be starting succession planning and linking this with an understanding of future resource requirements, risk management and business continuity.

Absence management has improved

122. All FRAs have introduced new absence management policies in the last three years, and they all provide access to occupational health services. Sickness absence is monitored and reviewed; these reviews, along with regular contact with people on long-term sick leave, inform decisions on how best to support staff to return to work. Through this approach, FRAs have started to achieve a reduction in sickness absence; the percentage of rider shifts lost due to sickness decreased by one per cent between 2004/05 and 2005/06 (Exhibit 22, overleaf). However, further

improvements can be made and this is an area for continued work.

Recommendations

- FRAs need to ensure that retained and volunteer staff get the full benefit of available training opportunities, through supporting the continued implementation of IPDS to these staff.

- FRAs need to do more to identify and meet the training and development needs of non-uniformed staff.

- FRAs need to further develop flexible working for firefighters, in particular in relation to duty systems and part-time working.

- All FRAs need to implement personal appraisal systems and integrate these with IPDS.

Exhibit 21
Delivering training flexibly

In four FRAs, the positive impact of flexible working has been realised in the area of training and development. A flexible working system has been introduced in the training and development teams in Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, Highlands and Islands, and Tayside. This enables the teams to deliver training in the evenings and weekends, which allows for the delivery of critical training to the retained sections of the FRA in a much more coherent and regular way. It has also had a positive effect on budgeting, by reducing requirements for the training teams to work overtime to meet training needs.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Exhibit 22
The percentage of rider shifts lost due to sickness

All FRAs have seen an improvement in sickness absence in the last 12 months.
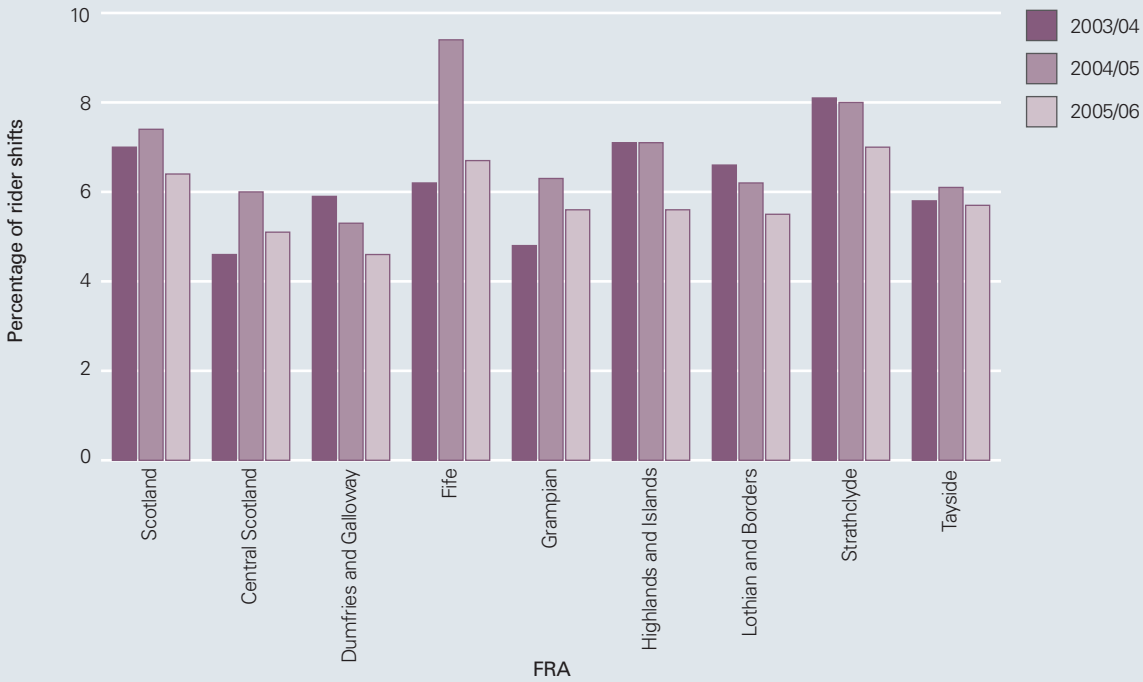
Source: Audit Scotland

Part 6. Equality and diversity

Key findings

- The diversity of the workforce in FRAs is not representative of the communities they serve. For FRAs to make significant improvements in this area will require a shift in cultural attitudes.

- FRAs are starting to embrace the equality agenda, and have implemented a variety of initiatives to drive this forward. However, not all FRAs are meeting legislative requirements.

- The delivery of equality and diversity training to staff is progressing well.

The diversity of the workforce in FRAs is not representative of the communities they serve

123. There is significant work to be done in all FRAs to increase the number of employees from under-represented groups. The fire and rescue service is not representative of the wider community. The majority of the workforce are operational firefighters (88 per cent) but only 3.9 per cent are women. In total, 11.4 per cent of the FRAs workforce is female. Only 46 people from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups are employed by FRAs across the whole of Scotland, accounting for 0.5 per cent of the total workforce (Exhibit 23, overleaf), while BME groups comprise two per cent[5] of the national population.

124. All FRAs have run positive action recruitment campaigns in the last two years (with the exception of Highlands and Islands which has not recruited wholetime staff recently). These campaigns involve targeting specific groups when advertising vacancies in an attempt to increase the numbers of applicants from under-represented groups. Campaigns have involved posters aimed at women and BME groups, targeted advertising in specific media such as Radio Ramadan, the *Caribbean Times* and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) publications, and recruitment information days specifically for women and BME groups.

125. FRAs use their links with partner organisations to help advertise these recruitment campaigns. For example, Grampian, Strathclyde and Tayside have applied to join Stonewall's Diversity Champion Scotland programme which has been established to help employers in the recruitment and retention of LGBT employees. However, more work is required to assess the effectiveness of these campaigns. Monitoring the profile of applicants and evaluating media advertising will assist in ensuring the campaigns are having an impact and providing value for money.

126. Two FRAs, Strathclyde and Tayside, have chosen to set performance targets to help them focus on encouraging

5   *Analysis of Ethnicity in the 2001 Census – Summary Report*, Scottish Executive, 2004. The Commission for Racial Equality estimate the current figure to be nearer five per cent.

Exhibit 23
Diversity of the workforce as at March 2006

The diversity of the workforce in FRAs is not representative of the communities they serve.

FRA	Male white	Male minority ethnic	Female white	Female minority ethnic
Central Scotland	420	3	51	1
Dumfries and Galloway	320	1	43	0
Fife	494	0	58	0
Grampian	793	2	102	2
Highlands and Islands	1292	2	123	0
Lothian and Borders	1040	14	177	2
Strathclyde	3158	14	396	3
Tayside	680	2	98	0
Scotland	8197	38	1048	8

Source: Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland and Audit Scotland fieldwork

under-represented groups to apply for vacancies. Strathclyde set targets for women to represent ten per cent of the uniformed workforce by 2010 and 15 per cent by 2015. Tayside has set targets for the number of women (eight per cent) and BME individuals (two per cent) applying for wholetime vacancies.

127. There is a perception among some operational staff that positive action campaigns constitute discrimination, and that individuals who attend positive action recruitment events are given an unfair advantage in the recruitment process. FRAs need to do more to communicate to staff the distinction between positive action and discrimination, and to demonstrate that positive action makes a valuable contribution to increasing the diversity of the workforce, which will benefit the organisation.

FRAs are starting to mainstream the equalities agenda

128. Nationally, FRAs are starting to recognise the importance of the equality agenda and are progressing work to take it forward. In autumn 2005, independent consultants were commissioned jointly by the eight FRAs in Scotland, and HMFSI, to undertake a cultural audit survey.[6] This sought the opinions of FRA employees on issues relating to fairness in the workplace, with specific questions on equality and diversity. Individual FRAs are taking forward the findings from the cultural audit through local equality forums. The eight FRAs are also in the process of establishing a national equality forum.

129. At a senior management level, FRAs demonstrate an enthusiasm and commitment to equality and diversity. They have started to mainstream equalities and develop policies in response to legislation. Each FRA, with the exception of Central Scotland and Grampian, has

a strategy in place which outlines how they intend to take forward the equality agenda. Within Central Scotland, equality and diversity is included in the draft HR strategy.

130. Five FRAs (Central Scotland, Grampian, Lothian and Borders, Strathclyde and Tayside) have a dedicated equality officer or equality team in place. While it is important that FRAs build capacity to take forward the equality agenda there is no correlation between the presence of a dedicated equality officer and good progress in this area. It is as important that the people tasked with taking forward the equality agenda have the skills and knowledge to do so effectively and receive the necessary support from senior management.

131. FRAs are implementing a variety of initiatives to drive forward the equality agenda, including the establishment of equality forums, training packages and equality 'champions' on fire and rescue boards. Most FRAs have

an equality forum which consists of representatives from across the authority who progress work in the equalities field and may also act as 'First Contact' advisers for staff subject to bullying or harassment. Central Scotland and Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Boards have elected members who are designated equalities 'champions', tasked with increasing knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity issues within the board.

Not all FRAs are meeting legislative requirements

132. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 imposed legislative requirements on public sector organisations, however they are not being systematically met by all FRAs (Exhibit 24, overleaf). Race Equality Schemes (RES) are in place in each FRA, but three are not complying with legislative monitoring of the profile of the workforce. The CFOA(S) Equality and Diversity Business Stream group is working on improving IT systems for this monitoring. Two FRAs are not undertaking Equality Impact Assessments on new or existing policies, which is in breach of legislative requirements. Although five FRAs are fulfilling current legislative requirements in relation to equality, overall more needs to be done to embed these statutory processes.

133. FRAs need to be prepared to respond to new equality legislation, such as the Employment Equality (Age) regulations, effective from 1 October 2006, as well as legislation covering disability (1 December 2006) and gender (1 April 2007). The CFOA(S) Equality and Diversity Business Stream group is developing a best practice model for an overarching equalities scheme, which is planned for completion by early 2007.

FRAs are starting to deliver equality and diversity training to all staff

134. Most FRAs have made good progress in delivering equality and diversity training to their staff. Both Dumfries and Galloway and Lothian and Borders have a dedicated diversity training team consisting of approximately six volunteers who have undergone a 'training the trainers' course delivered by a private company. These teams are responsible for cascading diversity training to all staff, and both are planning to increase their numbers in the future to achieve this. Central Scotland has a dedicated team in place which has successfully delivered comprehensive training covering all areas of equality and diversity to every member of staff within the FRA as well as Board members. The format for these educational events is face-to-face sessions where there is an interaction between tutor and participant. Tayside is rolling out diversity training through an equalities e-learning package (Exhibit 25, overleaf).

135. FRAs have yet to evaluate the impact of their training on cultural attitudes and awareness within their organisation.

Recommendations

- FRAs need to continue and improve their efforts to increase the diversity of the workforce.

- FRAs need to ensure they are meeting current legislative requirements related to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and are prepared to respond to forthcoming equality legislation.

- FRAs should continue to deliver equality and diversity training for all staff and put in place measures to evaluate the impact of this training on cultural attitudes and awareness within their organisation.

Exhibit 24
The extent to which FRAs are meeting legislative requirements

Legislative requirements relating to equality and diversity are not being systematically met by all FRAs.

FRA	3-year Race Equality Scheme	Equality Impact Assessments	Monitoring
Central Scotland	√	X	X
Dumfries and Galloway	√	√	√
Fife	√	√	X
Grampian	X [1]	X	X
Highlands and Islands	√	√	√
Lothian and Borders	√	√	√
Strathclyde	√	√	√
Tayside	√	√	√

Note:
1 Grampian Joint Fire and Rescue Board agreed an interim 12 month RES. A revised RES will be produced by April 2007, to bring it in line with the FRA's new three-year planning cycle.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Exhibit 25
Equality e-learning package in Tayside

Tayside has rolled out an e-learning package to allow staff to test their awareness of equality issues and the impact of changes that have been introduced in the FRA. The e-learning package is designed to impart knowledge, skills and understanding leading to a test at the conclusion of each module. The package covers issues relating to race, religion, age, gender, disability and sexual orientation. It includes links to internal policies and procedures and has references to sites on the Internet where staff can obtain further information on legislation changes that may affect them.

For each topic, staff are asked to complete a number of scenarios and then undertake a certification test. The results from these tests are monitored, allowing areas of weaknesses to be identified quickly, so that additional training can be developed and delivered where required.

To date, 90 per cent of uniformed and non-uniformed staff have completed the package including all the senior management team.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Part 7. Sustaining and managing change

Key findings

- There is early evidence that good progress is being made in implementing the service reform agenda, however the current level of activity needs to be enhanced and properly evaluated.

- New challenges in the future include pension liabilities, Firelink and the outcome of the Scottish Executive's resilience review.

136. This report has identified that all FRAs are starting to make progress in implementing the service reform agenda with the successful delivery of IRMP being the key area of focus. However, progress is variable across the eight FRAs and more work is required across every area of service reform. Sustaining progress will be challenging, but taking forward the areas for improvement identified in each FRA's local audit report will provide a framework for further improvement.

137. FRAs can demonstrate changes to their service delivery since 2004 with a refocus of activity from intervention to prevention and from property to people, and there is some early evidence to suggest that this work is having an impact. However, given that the overall number of incidents attended by FRAs has increased over the last 12 months, the current level of activity needs to be enhanced and properly evaluated. Such work is required to deliver the substantial reduction in risk anticipated in the legislation and national framework.

138. FRAs must now focus systematically on the changes required in other service areas such as training, equality and diversity, performance management and flexible working as they are all important elements of wider service reform.

The future holds new challenges for all FRAs

139. Over the next two to three years, FRAs in Scotland will not only have to manage the ongoing process of service reform but also deal with new and challenging issues such as firefighter pension liabilities, the introduction of Firelink and the outcome of the Scottish Executive's resilience review.

Firefighter pensions
140. Firefighter pensions are unfunded, and pension liabilities are an increasing financial risk for all FRAs. At 31 March 2006 the present value of scheme liabilities was £1.86 billion (Exhibit 26, overleaf). The increasing cost of maturing pension liabilities is having an increasing impact on the revenue available for service provision, and this situation is likely to worsen over the next couple of years as the large number of firefighters who joined the service in the late 1970s approach retirement. The Scottish Executive is currently reviewing a number of different options for funding firefighter pensions.

Firelink
141. The Firelink system will provide a new wide area radio system for communications between command and control facilities and vehicles. There will be a significant capital investment in Firelink (around

Exhibit 26
Pension liabilities as at 31 March 2006

Firefighter pensions are unfunded, and pension liabilities are an increasing financial risk for all FRAs.

FRA	Firefighter pension liability (£000)
Central Scotland	96,900
Dumfries and Galloway	49,900
Fife	154,000
Grampian	129,825
Highlands and Islands	68,200
Lothian and Borders	289,800
Strathclyde	919,400
Tayside	154,805
Scotland	1,862,830

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

£400 million across England, Wales and Scotland over the initial ten-year contract). The Scottish Executive will meet the core costs of the system (£19.6 million in 2007/08), whilst each of the FRAs will pay their proportion of the service fee element of the project which amounts to a total of approximately £3.6 million per annum.

142. Implementation of Firelink has already commenced and will be carried out in two phases, with a final completion date scheduled for February 2009. All existing equipment will be replaced on a like-for-like basis where this is an essential operational requirement. Once installed, the new system will not only improve radio communications within and between FRAs, but will also enable improved communications with the police, as Firelink is compatible with their new Airwave system, and in due course with the Scottish Ambulance system which is also moving to Airwave.

Resilience
143. At a national level, HM Chief Inspector of Fire Services is currently leading a Scottish Executive review of Scotland's ability to deal with simultaneous major emergencies, in consultation with all key stakeholders. The review will report to ministers in the summer of 2007, and will focus on how effective emergency response arrangements relate to the wider public service reform agenda.

Part 8. Recommendations

144. Each of the preceding chapters concludes with a number of recommendations identifying areas where FRAs need to take further action to support service reform. These recommendations are collated below, and form an improvement agenda for the fire and rescue service in Scotland.

Part 2 – Prevention and risk management

- FRAs should ensure that HFSVs are rolled out on a more comprehensive basis and undertaken within the context of IRMP. Greater use should be made of retained personnel and training carried out on a more systematic basis.

- A more strategic approach to partnership working needs to be developed. FRAs need to make greater use of partnership registers and develop ways to evaluate individual partnerships to ensure they support their corporate aims and objectives. FRAs should also seek to use the National Standards for Community Engagement.

- FRAs need to do more to evaluate systematically the effectiveness of their community safety activities to ensure they are making optimum use of resources and contributing to objectives set out in their IRMPs and associated corporate plans. Through CFOA(S), FRAs should continue to work collaboratively to identify and share best practice.

Part 3 – Leadership and governance

Prior to and following the local elections in May 2007:

- Elected members on FRAs should ensure they are effectively meeting all their statutory duties in relation to Best Value.

- FRAs should explore the potential for elected members to champion specific issues or initiatives related to service reform.

- FRAs should support elected members in ensuring that board and committee structures effectively meet the changing focus of fire and rescue services.

- FRAs should prepare and conduct a training needs analysis of elected members and use the opportunity provided by the 2007 local elections to introduce a development programme for members and consider whether improved administrative support for members may assist them in discharging their duties.

Part 4 – Financial and performance management

- FRAs should continue their efforts to improve the efficient use of resources (including taking action to reduce the number of AFAs) and take account of the ongoing financial implications of service reform.

- FRAs should develop comprehensive performance management frameworks, including the development of local performance indicators, to assess progress against their strategic objectives and build a culture of continuous improvement.

- FRAs should review their approach to public performance

reporting to ensure it satisfies the requirements of Section 13 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Part 5 – Workforce management

- FRAs need to ensure that retained and volunteer staff get the full benefit of available training opportunities, through supporting the continued implementation of IPDS to these staff.

- FRAs need to do more to identify and meet the training and development needs of non-uniformed staff.

- FRAs need to further develop flexible working for firefighters, in particular in relation to duty systems and part-time working.

- All FRAs need to implement personal appraisal systems and integrate these with IPDS.

Part 6 – Equality and diversity

- FRAs need to continue and improve their efforts to increase the diversity of the workforce.

- FRAs need to ensure they are meeting current legislative requirements related to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and are prepared to respond to forthcoming equality legislation.

- FRAs should continue to deliver equality and diversity training for all staff and put in place measures to evaluate the impact of this training on cultural attitudes and awareness within their organisation.

Appendix 1. Performance indicators reported on by all Scottish FRAs

Statutory Performance Indicators

Fire casualties:
a) the number of incidents resulting in casualties per 10,000 population
b) the number of fatal and non-fatal casualties per 10,000 population.

The number of accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 population.

The percentage of:
a) rider shifts lost due to sickness and light duties
b) working time lost to sickness for all other staff directly employed by the service.

The number and proportion of calls to incidents handled:
a) within one minute
b) within two minutes.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Performance Indicators
The LPIs also include all the SPIs listed above.

Number of deliberate fires per 10,000 fires for:
a) primary fires
b) secondary fires.

Incidents when Fire and Rescue Services are used at an RTC, expressed as a percentage of incidents where mobilisation takes place.

Number of Home Fire Safety Visits per 1,000 domestic properties.

The percentage of occasions operational appliance maintenance schedules are achieved.

Wholetime employees deemed operationally unfit expressed as a percentage of all wholetime employees.

Minority ethnic employees as a percentage of total employees (benchmarked against the ethnic minority population in each fire and rescue service area).

Female employees as a percentage of total employees.

Female employees promoted as a percentage of all employees promoted.

Wholetime firefighters who have achieved SVQ level 3 (Operations in the Community) as a percentage of all wholetime firefighters.

Reported injury rate per 100,000 employees.

RIDDOR injury rate per 100,000 employees.

Reported near misses per 100,000 employees.

Number of attacks on firefighters per 1,000 incidents.

Major incident plans completed as a proportion of major incident scenarios identified.

Number of FOI(S)A requests per 10,000 population from:
a) news media
b) others.

Number of non-routine FOI(S)A requests per 10,000 population directed to FOI officer for handling and dealt with within the specified 20 working day time limit.

Appendix 2. Glossary

AFA	Automatic Fire Alarm
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CO	Chief Officer
CFOA(S)	Chief Fire Officers Association (Scotland)
FFDP	Firefighter Development Programme
FRA	Fire and Rescue Authority
FSEC	Fire Service Emergency Cover – software issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government to help FRAs carry out the risk mapping required for IRMP
GAE	Grant Aided Expenditure
HMFSI	Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland
HFSVs	Home Fire Safety Visits
HR	Human Resources
IPDS	Integrated Personal Development System
IRMP	Integrated Risk Management Planning
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
LPIs	Scottish Local Performance Indicators – a set of CFOA indicators designed to allow Scottish FRAs to benchmark their performance against each other.
PPR	Public Performance Reporting
NJC	National Joint Council
RES	Race Equality Scheme
RTC	Road Traffic Collision
SPIs	Statutory Performance Indicators – statutory indicators set out in the Accounts Commission's annual Direction, under the Local Government Act 1992.

Appendix 3. Study advisory group members

Mike Callaghan	Policy Manager, COSLA
Lynne Dickson	Policy and Research Adviser, CFOA(S)
Terry Gray	Policy Manager, COSLA
Andrew Hughes	Fire and Rescue Service National Policy Lead, Audit Commission
Stephen Hunter	Chief Fire Officer, Tayside Fire and Rescue Service, CFOA(S)
Jonathan O'Neill	Managing Director, Fire Protection Association
Jeff Ord	Chief Inspector, Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland
Ian Walford	Head of Civil Contingencies Division, Scottish Executive
Jennifer Wallace	Policy Manager, Scottish Consumer Council
Richard Whetton	National Community Safety Coordinator, Scottish Executive

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