



NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY



IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2007 - 08

Prepared under section 6 of the Local Government Act 1999 and issued in accordance with arrangements made by the Welsh Assembly Government for Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales

DRAFT

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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to North Wales Fire and Rescue's Annual Improvement Plan. It will provide you with an overview of North Wales Fire and Rescue's performance, both in general terms and in relation to specific issues that affect the running of the Authority and the Service.

This Improvement Plan (previously called a 'Best Value Performance Plan') focuses on three financial years: 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09, reporting on the progress made last year, what faces the Authority this year, and what is anticipated to affect the Authority and the Service next year.

Draft guidance dated August 2007 was used as a basis for the compilation of this plan, this being the latest available version. Formal Welsh Assembly Government guidance is awaited on the required contents of Improvements Plans under the Welsh Assembly's Wales Improvement Programme (WPI) for Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales.

We trust that you will find the information provided here both informative and interesting. If you have any comments or wish to respond to any of the issues described in this plan, we would be pleased to hear from you. Please contact us via the Corporate Planning Manager at the address given at the end of this document.

The Service's website is also continually being updated and hosts a wealth of information on a range of matters such as audit reports, service strategies, etc. We would encourage you to log on to www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk.

Section 1

OVERVIEW OF THE AUTHORITY AND SERVICE

This first section presents general information on North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority and North Wales Fire and Rescue Service – why they exist, how they are run and organized, what they achieve, and what they look after.

Our mission is to make North Wales
a safer place to live, work and visit.

CORE DUTIES

The principal duties of the Fire and Rescue Authority, as defined in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, are:

1. To promote fire safety through the provision of information, publicity and encouragement to prevent fires and deaths and injuries by fire;
2. To give advice, on request, about how to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property, and on means of escape in the event of fire;
3. To make provision for protecting life and property in the event of fires;
4. To make provision for rescuing and protecting people from serious harm in the event of road traffic accidents;
5. To respond to other emergencies or eventualities as required to protect people, property, or the environment.

CORPORATE AIMS

These five fundamental aims summarise every aspect of what North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority wants to achieve through the day-to-day operations of the Service.

1. To prevent accidental and malicious fires.
2. To protect people from being killed or injured by fire and other hazards.
3. To protect the Community, businesses and the Environment from being harmed by fire and other hazards.
4. To find ways to improve in order to meet the expectations of the Community.
5. To operate as effectively and efficiently as we can, making the best use of the resources we have available.

CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

Supporting our Corporate Aims, we have a set of just twenty very clear objectives that describe how we intend to go about achieving our aims.

In line with Aim No. 1, we want to:

- 1) Prevent accidental fires through:
 - Fire Safety Education in schools and other venues
 - Community Fire Safety activities
 - Enforcement of Fire Safety legislation in applicable buildings
 - Promoting the services of the Commercial Fire Safety Unit
- 2) Prevent malicious fires by:
 - Seeking to influence the behaviour of specific targeted groups of people
 - Participating in partnership activities with Police and other agencies to reduce arson

In line with Aim No. 2, we want to:

- 3) Sustain our ability to respond effectively by:
 - Maintaining an effective means of alerting the Service
 - Providing an effective Control Room function
 - Attending incidents with appropriate resources and well trained, well equipped fire fighters
- 4) Vigorously promote the provision of adequate early warning and means of escape from all buildings in the event of fire
- 5) Provide advice to individuals and organisations on how best to react in the event of fire

In line with Aim No. 3, we want to:

- 6) Minimise disruption to normal day to day activities following fire or other emergency
- 7) Assist in achieving early recovery in the aftermath of emergencies and disasters
- 8) Ensure that our own procedures cause the least damage through the application of responsible and environmentally sensitive practices

In line with Aim No. 4, we want to:

- 9) Maintain a meaningful dialogue with the Community we serve, our partners and other stakeholders
- 10) React positively to any complaints that we receive
- 11) Be able to demonstrate our continuing dedication to fairness and equality in all areas of activity
- 12) Provide a fully bilingual service where Welsh and English are treated as equal
- 13) Advocate and maintain professional standards at all times
- 14) Comply with all legislation applicable to the Fire Service
- 15) Use the Best Value Framework to involve the Community in seeking continuous improvement in all our functions

And in line with Aim No. 5, we want to:

- 16) Use and continuously improve our processes within a recognised Performance Management Framework as part of the Best Value regime
- 17) Seek out and contribute to collaborative and partnership opportunities in order to maximise our capability to serve the public
- 18) Maintain a dynamic and flexible approach to improvement, including developing our position as active participants in the commercial world
- 19) Adapt our policies and procedures to meet new challenges and expectations whilst maintaining our compliance with legal obligations
- 20) Manage our resources well, ensuring that our current and future services are delivered efficiently, effectively and economically

CORE VALUES

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service have a set of core values which drive our organisation and highlight the priorities of how we work.

Our core values are:

Service to the community

We value service to the community by:

- Working with all groups to reduce risk
- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Being answerable to those we serve
- Striving for excellence in all we do

People

We value all our employees by practising and promoting:

- Fairness and respect
- Recognition of merit
- Honesty, integrity and mutual trust
- Personal Development
- Co-operative and inclusive working

Diversity

We value diversity in the Service and the community by:

- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Providing various solutions for different needs and expectations
- Promoting equal opportunities in employment with progression within the Service
- Challenging prejudice and discrimination

Improvement

We value improvement at all levels of the Service by accepting responsibility for our performance by:

- Being open-minded
- Considering criticism thoughtfully
- Learning from our experience
- Consulting others

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Responsibility for fire and rescue services and the promotion of fire safety in Wales lies with the **Welsh Assembly Government**. The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government heads the Merthyr Tydfil-based *Department for Social Justice and Local Government* which has four divisions relating to: Communities, Local Government Policy, Local Government Finance and Community Safety (which includes fire).

North Wales **Fire and Rescue Authority** is one of just three fire and rescue authorities in Wales. Its role is:

- To perform all the duties and responsibilities of a Fire Authority in accordance with appropriate legislation and regulations, in particular the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety) Order 2005 - which came into force on 1 October 2006, and the 1995 Combination Scheme.
- To agree the annual service plans, the revenue and capital budgets and the contribution for the constituent councils.
- To monitor the revenue and capital budgets and deal with any significant variations, including decisions on any supplementary contributions.

The Authority was established in April 1996, and comprises 28 councillors from the six unitary authorities of North Wales: Anglesey County Council (3); Conwy County Borough Council (5); Denbighshire County Council (4); Flintshire County Council (6); Gwynedd Council (5); Wrexham County Borough Council (5). The number of representatives from each constituent authority is determined on a population basis.

North Wales **Fire and Rescue Service** is headed by the Chief Fire Officer, who has overall corporate management and operational responsibility for the Service. He also provides professional advice to the Authority.

SERVICE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



WORKFORCE STRUCTURE

THIS TABLE SHOWS THE NUMBER OF POSTS FUNDED (not the number of individual people employed) AS AT 31st MARCH 2007

	All posts	Wholetime					Retained	Control		Support staff
		Central /county functions	Staff development	Fire Safety	Fire Stations	Non-operational	Posts on fire stations as 24 hour units of cover	Control non-watch	Control on watch	Support staff
Principal Officer	5	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Area Manager	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Group Manager	15	13	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Station Manager	32	12	1	17	0	2	0	0	0	0
Watch Manager	104	5	11	11	22	2	44	1	8	0
Crew Manager	144	0	0	3	48	0	89	0	4	0
Firefighter	554	0	0	0	143	0	399	0	12	0
Local Government	117	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	117
Totals	974	37	12	31	213	6	532	2	24	117
				299			532	26		117

FACTS AND FIGURES

GENERAL

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service operates across the six unitary authority areas of North Wales, helping to protect a population of around 675,500¹, 299,000 domestic properties and 27,000 non-domestic properties². Additionally, it protects visitors, transport network users, the natural environment (including beyond its coastline), businesses and other infrastructures. It supports other fire and rescue services in the UK when required and remains continually prepared to protect in the event of large scale disasters.

FINANCIAL

In 2006-07, revenue spending was £29,984,000, which included £5,324,000 spent on Community Fire Safety and £20,625,000 on fire fighting and rescue operations³.

EMPLOYEES

On 31st March 2007, a total of 1,038 individual people were employed by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service - 578 as retained firefighters, 298 as wholetime firefighters, 129 as support staff and 33 as control staff⁴.

Staff profiles and details of staff turnover rates on the following pages give more detail of a workforce that is becoming increasingly diverse.

¹ The National Statistics 'Statistics for Wales' Bulletin SB/40/2007 published 22 August 2007, reports the 2006 mid-year estimate as 675,700. StatsWales website table 3122 reports the 2006 mid year estimate as 675,563.

² CIPFA Fire and Rescue Service Statistics 2006 columns (7) and (8)

³ Information supplied by Treasurer's Department, Conwy CBC

⁴ Information supplied in 2006-07 Annual Operational Returns HRFW10-17

STAFF PROFILES AS AT 31ST MARCH 2007

Age Profile:

Almost 82% of the workforce were aged between 25 and 49 years.

Age as at 31 March 2007	16-24	25-34	35-49	50-54	55-59	60+	All
Retained Operational Staff	53	168	307	38	11	1	578
Wholetime Operational Staff	8	71	188	29	2	0	298
Support Staff	10	34	52	16	9	8	129
Control Staff	1	8	20	3	1	0	33
All staff	72	281	567	86	23	9	1038
As a percentage	6.9%	27.1%	54.6%	8.3%	2.2%	0.9%	100%

Gender Profile:

Of the 1,038 people employed, 892 (86%) were men, and 146 (14%) were women.

Racial Profile:

Of the 1,038 people employed, 96% classified their racial origin as white.

Racial origin	White	Black	Asian	Mixed	Chinese	Not recorded	All
Retained Operational Staff	545	2	0	3	0	28	578
Wholetime Operational Staff	296	0	1	0	0	1	298
Support Staff	120	0	0	0	0	9	129
Control Staff	33	0	0	0	0	0	33
All staff	994	2	1	3	0	38	1038
As a percentage	96%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0%	3.7%	100%

STAFF TURNOVER

The Service routinely monitors and reports the gender and ethnic origin of people who apply for jobs in the Service, people who are eventually recruited, and staff who leave. This helps in the evaluation of recruitment campaigns and equalities policies. The following information refers to the 2006-07 year.

Applications, New Starters and Successful Applicants

Wholetime Operational Posts
No new applications were considered, but 6 men and 4 women were recruited from the previous year's list of applicants.
Retained Operational Posts
250 applications were considered, of which 19 (7.6%) were from women and 2 (0.8%) were from people from a non-white ethnic background. The ethnicity of a further 8 people was not known. 98 (42.4%) men applicants were successful, and 8 (42.0%) women applicants were successful.
Support Posts
219 applications were considered, of which 111 (50.7%) were from women, and 3 (1.4%) were from people from a non-white ethnic background. 5 (4.6%) men applicants were successful, and 9 (8.1%) women applicants were successful.
Control Posts
No new applications were considered, but 1 man and 1 woman were recruited from the previous year's list of applicants.

Leavers (including retirements)

Wholetime Operational Posts
11 men and 1 woman left during the year.
Retained Operational Posts
39 men and 1 woman left during the year.
Support Posts
4 men and 6 women left during the year.
Control Posts
1 woman left during the year.

Activity and Performance Levels in the Year Ended 31 March 2006⁵

The table below uses the latest available published figures to give an indication of recent activity levels and how North Wales compares with other areas of Wales, and with other Fire and Rescue Services in a comparator group set up in 1999.

In the following year – i.e. to 31 March 2007 - North Wales Fire and Rescue Service responded to 10,136 incidents, including 1,743 primary fires, 2,590 secondary fires, 4,212 false alarms (164 malicious and 2950 from systems), 803 special services and 520 road traffic collisions.

Year on year, the number of emergency incidents has reduced, but the pattern relating to time of day remains constant, with most occurring between 4.00pm and 10.00pm.

	Fires ⁶	False Alarms ⁷	Special Services ⁸	Deaths from fire ⁹	Injuries from fire ¹⁰	Population ¹¹
North Wales	4,146	4,289	1,555	9	194	670,800
Cumbria	3,682	2,753	1,375	7	129	494,800
Lincolnshire	3,122	3,246	4,726	7	142	687,800
Hereford and Worcester	3,138	3,919	1,773	1	74	717,000
North Yorkshire	3,572	5,160	2,047	4	170	764,900
Mid and West Wales	6,663	4,954	4,141	6	237	865,000
Devon	5,314	6,525	4,785	9	265	1,110,800
South Wales	13,520	9,658	3,173	11	325	1,435,000

⁵ Figures are taken from the latest full-year publication – the Fire and Statistics Monitor for the period up to 31 March 2006, issued by Communities and Local Government 20 March 2007.

⁶ Total fires includes primary, secondary and chimney fires.

⁷ Total false alarms includes those made maliciously, those from automatic fire alarm systems, and those made with good intent.

⁸ Special Services (i.e. non-fire emergencies such as flooding and road traffic collisions) figures are not available yet for 2005-06: figures given are the latest published by CIPFA, relating to 2004-05.

⁹ Deaths from fires in all locations, and both accidental and deliberate. These are provisional figures and are subject to change, sometimes years after the fire.

¹⁰ Injuries includes where a person has been advised by the fire crew to seek a medical check-up after a fire as a precaution, there may not have been an actual injury, and the person may not have heeded that advice.

¹¹ CIPFA Fire and Rescue Service Statistics 2006 col. (1)

Assets

In North Wales, there are 44 fire stations, 3 of which (in Wrexham, Queensferry and Rhyl) stay open around the clock; 5 of which are permanently staffed between 12:00 midday and 10:00 p.m. and operate as retained fire stations outside those hours; and 36 which operate wholly as retained fire stations.

Since 2005, the main headquarters function has been run from premises on the St Asaph Business Park, and there are county headquarters offices located within each of the 6 county council areas. Some central functions are still run from Rhyl, and Fleet Maintenance workshops and Stores are located in purpose-built premises in Llandudno Junction. In addition to the main skills learning and development centre in Rhyl, there are other training facilities in Dolgellau. The main control room is also in Rhyl, with a secondary fallback control room in Caernarfon.

The Service also has a fleet of operational and support vehicles to respond in a range of emergency and non-emergency situations:

- 4 Aerial appliances
- 1 Fire Bike
- 27 cars
- 4 minibuses
- 63 vans
- 66 fire appliances
- 32 special appliances.

[INSERT MAP OF NORTH WALES]

Section 2

LOOKING BACK AT 2006-07

PERFORMANCE

The Service performed well in 2006-07, hitting 70% of the targets for the year and showing improvement against 80% of the adopted performance indicators. There were, however, a few notable and unwelcome exceptions to this, and these are discussed in more detail under the relevant heading in this document.

Operational Activity Performance Indicators

BVPI 142ii, 206i and 206ii Primary fires

The number of primary fires (i.e. those involving rescues, injuries or property, and larger scale secondary fires) rose slightly by comparison with the previous year, and the target was not met.

Why? Because although the number of accidental primary fires fell by almost 6% to 1,107, deliberate primary fires increased by over 10% to 726.

In 2006-07, 42% of all primary fires had been started on purpose. So although all our fire prevention and community fire safety work seems to be having some good results, crime, antisocial and otherwise problematic behaviour have undoubtedly affected the Service's overall activity levels and raised the overall risk to the Community.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
All primary fires	1739	1680	1743	No	No
Deliberate primary fires (excluding those in vehicles)	308	264	290	Yes	No
Deliberate primary fires in vehicles only	350	340	436	No	No

BV206 Deliberate Fires

In addition to the 726 deliberate primary fires attended in 2006-07 (see above), the Service attended a further 1,680 in secondary locations (i.e. outdoors in grassland, or hedges, in outdoor structures such as playground furniture, in derelict buildings and vehicles, and in dustbins, wheelie bins, etc.) In total, fires that were started deliberately increased from 2,308 in 2005-06 to 2,406. That's an average of over 46 per week throughout the year.

Each one of these fires represents an increased risk to the Community, a diversion of resources away from other areas of service, and an inevitable impact on the

Environment. Many have other unfortunate consequences such as schools closure, business interruption, destruction of habitat or scarring of landscapes.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
Deliberate secondary fires (excluding deliberate secondary fires in vehicles)	1618	1608	1665	No	No
Deliberate secondary fires in vehicles	32	30	15	Yes	Yes

BVPI 142iii Accidental fires in dwellings

The main focus of our Community Fire Safety work has been on reducing accidental fires in dwellings, as this is historically where people are most likely to be killed or injured if a fire does occur. Safety messages, targeted campaigns, special events, schools visits and free Home Fire Safety Checks have all contributed to the year on year reduction in the number of accidental fires attended in people's homes.

Where fires have started, over 90% were successfully extinguished before they spread beyond the room where they first started. This relies not simply on the construction of the premises, but on a possible combination of the speed of response from the Service and the safety measures taken by the householder of closing doors to contain any fires, and having effective smoke detectors to raise the alarm before the fire has had an opportunity to develop and spread.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
Accidental fires in dwellings	499	486	450	Yes	Yes
% of accidental fires in dwellings confined to the room of origin	89.4%	90%	90.2%	Yes	Yes

BVPI 143i Deaths from accidental fires in dwellings

Following a steady decline in the number of deaths from accidental fires in dwellings in North Wales up to 2004-05, a sharp unexpected increase in the first half of 2006-07 prompted the Chief Fire Officer to establish a special task group to examine what lay behind this increase, and to come up with a number of recommendations for improvement.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
Deaths from accidental fires in dwellings	5	3	10	No	No

BVPI 143ii Injuries (excl. precautionary checks) from accidental fires in dwellings

The number of people injured (but not killed) in accidental fires in the home decreased by almost a third when compared to the previous year, but nevertheless accounts for an average of three people per month.

In 2005-06, injuries were recorded at 1 per 9.8 accidental fires in dwellings. By 2006-07, this had fallen to 1 per 12.5, which was a welcome improvement.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
Injuries from accidental fires in dwellings	51	50	36	Yes	Yes

BVPI 209 Smoke alarm ownership

Early warning of a fire in the home can mean the difference between life and death, and the difference between minor and major damage to the property.

The Service invests a great deal of time and resources encouraging people to have smoke alarms installed in their homes, and – importantly – to ensure that their smoke alarms are in working order at all times. The Service provides free Home Fire Safety Checks - including free smoke detectors and other equipment – throughout North Wales.

The Authority's aim is ultimately to achieve 100% coverage, so that whenever the Service is called to attend a fire in someone's home, there is always a working smoke alarm fitted. This aim is translated into a target of 30,000 Home Fire Safety Checks per year, which would mean that all homes in North Wales would have been visited before 2019.

Throughout the year, the Service attended 524 dwelling fires (450 accidental and 74 deliberate). In 268 of these, a smoke alarm was fitted and activated correctly, but in 79 the smoke alarm did not activate, and in a further 154 there wasn't even one fitted. Now that the landmark statistic of over 50% has been achieved, the intention is to press ahead to achieve as near as possible to the 100%.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
The percentage of fires attended in dwellings (all causes) where a smoke alarm had activated	45.9%	46.5%	50.9%	Yes	Yes
The percentage of fires attended in dwellings (all causes) where a smoke alarm was fitted but did not activate	20.1%	20.4%	15.1%	Yes	Yes
The percentage of fires attended in dwellings (all causes) where no smoke alarm was fitted	32.7%	33.1%	29.3%	Yes	Yes

Note: because this indicator focuses on smoke alarms, those few homes where heat or fire detection systems had been installed are not included in the calculation.

BVPI 208 People who escaped unharmed from accidental dwelling fires

The vast majority of people caught up in accidental fires in the home are able to escape the fire unharmed and without needing to wait for a fire engine to arrive on the scene to rescue them.

The significance of this indicator is that it shows how well-prepared people are. If a fire does break out, then early warning from a smoke or fire alarm and quick reaction from a well practiced escape plan will give people the best possible chance of escaping the fire unharmed.

In 2006-07, 891 people out of 1018 escaped unharmed and unaided, which is a higher percentage than in the previous year. As smoke alarm ownership increases, and as increasing numbers of people across North Wales are given advice during Home Fire Safety Checks, we would expect this percentage to continue to rise.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
The percentage of people in accidental fires in dwellings who escaped unharmed without fire and rescue service assistance at the fire	86.7%	86.4%	87.5%	Yes	Yes

BVPI 146 Malicious False Alarms

People who maliciously call out the Fire and Rescue Service pretending that there is a real fire are not only committing an offence but are also raising the overall level of risk to the Community.

Over recent years, through the implementation of call management techniques and the use of modern technology, the Service has become increasingly adept at recognising these false alarms before any fire engines are mobilised to respond.

This has resulted in fewer malicious false alarms being received, and of those received, three-quarters are filtered out before a response is made.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
The number of calls to malicious false alarms received	859	859	717	Yes	Yes
The number of calls to malicious false alarms that were not attended	622	644 (75%)	552 (77%)	Yes	Yes
The number of malicious false alarms attended	237	215 (25%)	165 (23%)	Yes	Yes

BVPI 207 Fires in Non-Domestic Properties

In addition to the 524 dwelling fires that the Service attended in 2006-07, a further 321 were attended in non-domestic premises such as schools, offices and factories. This number was within the target for the year.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
Fires in non-domestic properties	333	323	321	Yes	Yes

BVPI 149 False Alarms of Fire from Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA) in Non-Domestic Properties

Although the Service encourages the installation of automatic fire alarm systems to provide early warning of fire so that people can safely evacuate a building, a great number are either poorly installed, poorly maintained or not managed properly, resulting in the generation of false alarms, often from the same premises.

As well as wasting the Service's time and resources in attending, risk levels are raised if people stop reacting to fire alarms, and also if a genuine fire or other emergency were to happen when the fire engine is already out attending a false alarm.

Despite efforts by Service managers to persuade premises owners to improve their alarm systems, and given that the Service has not been given powers to charge for attending, the reduction in the overall number of false alarms from all types of premises (domestic and non-domestic) fell by just 1.5% in 2006-07 to 2,952.

Although the Service exceeded the target for reducing the number of false alarms from non-domestic AFAs during the year, these still accounted for Service vehicles and crews being needlessly mobilised over 2,000 times.

Multiple false alarms continue to be a problem with some premises. In relation to non-domestic premises only, the Service attended 389 just once, and 342 more than once, in response to an AFA false alarm, making a total of 731 different premises attended during the year. This is discussed in more detail in Section 4.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
(a) False alarms from automatic fire detection apparatus (in non-domestic properties only)	2,201	2,145	2,092	Yes	Yes
(b) The number of those properties with more than 1 attendance	350	340	342	Yes	No
The percentage of the false alarms in (a) above, that came from the properties in (b) above.	83.7%	82.4%	81.4%	Yes	Yes

Equality and Diversity Performance Indicators

The Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to ensuring that all facets of the equalities agenda are followed, and has made a good deal of progress not necessarily reflected in results against some of the national performance indicators.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
The level (if any) of the Equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms	Level 3	Level 4	Level 3	No	No
The duty to promote race equality – the quality of an Authority's Race Equality Scheme (RES) and the improvements resulting from its application	89%	95%	89%	No	No

An increasing number of women in a predominantly male workforce

Refer also to the workforce profiles in Section 1.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
The percentage of firefighters who are women	3%	3.5%	3.9%	Yes	Yes

Profile of the highest paid in the Service

Analysis of the top 5% of earners has been used for a number of years to give an indication of how diverse the senior levels of the service are. However, basing the indicator on earnings fails to take account of the different pay scales used within the Fire and Rescue Service, and should therefore be approached with caution.

Of the 24 people who make up the top 5% of earners, none has a disability, 4 are white women, and 20 are white men. In a small organisation such as North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, the opportunity to change is limited as can be seen from the breakdown of starters and leavers in Section 1. However, even with this limited turnover of staff, the Service places great emphasis on increasing the number of applications from across a wide spectrum of people to maximise the possibility of creating a more diverse senior management team in future.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
The % of the top 5% of earners who are women	4.3%	13%	16.7%	Yes	Yes
The % of the top 5% of earners who are from black and ethnic minority communities	0%	4.8%	0%	No	No
The % of the top 5% of earners that have a disability	0%	4.8%	0%	No	No

Employees who have a Disability

All employees are valued for the skills that they have and the personal attributes that they bring to the Service. Although we are pleased to report that the number of employees with a disability has risen this year, we know that this is primarily a case of better reporting and recording of this information.

As the fire and rescue service nationally becomes increasingly positive towards disability, more employees feel confident in coming forward to declare their disability. At the end of March 2007, a total of 25 members of staff stated that they have a disability. According to published information¹², there are 75,000 economically active people living in North Wales who have a disability, which equates to 18.8% of the economically active population. The Service therefore has some way to go towards matching that percentage, but this sort of level is nevertheless an aspirational aim of the Service.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
The percentage of wholetime and retained duty system uniformed staff with a disability	0.12%	18.8%	0.86%	Yes	No
The percentage of control and non-uniformed staff with a disability	0.7%	18.8%	5.7%	Yes	No
The percentage of the economically active population in the authority area who have a disability	18.0%	-	18.8%	-	-

Employees who are from ethnic minority backgrounds

The most recent published information¹³ shows that across all age ranges, there are 8,000 people who say they are from a non-white background in North Wales. In the absence of a more detailed breakdown of people from ethnic minority backgrounds who are also classified as 'economically active', this has been estimated on the basis that 60% of the North Wales population is classified as economically active¹⁴ – i.e. that there are 4,800 people who are both economically active and from an ethnic minority background. From the total number of economically active people, therefore, a figure of 1.2% has been used for the percentage that are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
The percentage of uniformed wholetime, retained duty system and control staff from ethnic minority backgrounds.	0.5%	1.2%	0.7%	Yes	No

¹² Stats Wales Table 003264 Local Labour Force Survey/Annual Population Survey

¹³ Stats Wales Table 003265 Local Labour Force Survey/Annual Population Survey

¹⁴ 'All persons' in Stats Wales Tables 003264 and 003265 (i.e. that 400,000 out of 665,000 are economically active)

The percentage of economically active (persons aged 18-54) population from ethnic minority communities in the fire and rescue service area	Estimated 1.2%	-	Estimated 1.2%	-	-
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Efficiency Performance Indicators

With the increasing pressure on public finances and the finite amount of resources available, all public bodies are expected to be as efficient as possible in the delivery of services. A number of initiatives and efficiency improvements have been implemented: only those covered by the performance indicator set have been included here. This is described in more detail in Section 4.

Sickness absence

The Service has adopted a range of measures to encourage a reduction in the number of working days or shifts being lost due to staff sickness. By providing wide-ranging support to those who are genuinely ill, and taking effective, fair and timely management action where appropriate, the Service has successfully improved performance against this indicator, even though the extremely challenging target set by the UK government a few years ago has not yet been met.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
Working days/shifts lost to sickness absence per whole-time uniformed member of staff (including control)	10.2	6.5	7.4	Yes	No
Working days/shifts lost to sickness absence per member of staff (for all members of staff)	9.8	6.5	8.3	Yes	No

Ill-health Retirements

In conjunction with effective management of sickness absence, and by careful management of health and safety, the Service strives to ensure that as few people as possible have to retire from the Service on the grounds of ill-health.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
The percentage of employees eligible for membership of the firefighters' pension scheme retiring on ill-health grounds.	1.4% 4 people	1.4%	0.7% 2 people	Yes	Yes
The percentage of employees eligible for membership of the local government pension scheme retiring on ill-health grounds.	0%	0.6% 1 person	0%	N/A	Yes

Prompt Payment of Invoices

We aim also to be a good organisation to do business with, and one aspect of that is the prompt payment of undisputed invoices for commercial goods and services. In 2006-07 the Service handled 9,219 invoices that fell into this category, of which 7,412 were paid in 30 days or sooner. This was a lower percentage than in the previous year, but we anticipate that changes implemented within the finance department this year will help to increase that percentage.

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
The percentage of undisputed invoices for commercial goods and services paid within 30 days of such invoices being received	89.6%	95%	80.5%	No	No

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Section 3

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT IN 2007-08

Fire and Rescue Services have undergone a great deal of change over recent years, including the national programme of modernisation and devolution of responsibility for the service in Wales and Scotland.

There is a danger that the various workstreams associated with such fundamental changes produce an overwhelming and unwieldy array of action plans. One of the more welcome and fundamental changes in corporate terms this year, therefore, has been the introduction of a process that combines a number of different processes:

JOINT RISK ASSESSMENT

As a means of securing continuous improvement, a range of risks identified through audit and assessment processes are brought together as a single Joint Risk Assessment document that is agreed by the Authority.

This is a new annual process conducted by senior officers in the Service, auditors from the Wales Audit Office and members of peer assessment teams. The Joint Risk Assessment draws on the findings of the Operational and Non-operational Assurance processes, and Wales Audit Office work on *Making the Connections* and previous regulatory work.

This risk-based regulatory approach focuses on addressing the underlying causes of any barriers that inhibit improvements, and also it provides a vehicle for sharing good practice. Areas covered include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risk analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prevention and protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Governance and management
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operational preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Call management and incident support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performance management and improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emergency response	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• E-fire and rescue

The identified issues are allocated two risk ratings – the first based on the inherent risk to the Authority, and the second based on the residual risk that would remain after risk reduction or risk control measures had been implemented.

The risks are all categorized according to whether they presented a high, medium or low risk to the Authority's ability to meet its corporate aims and objectives.

Key Risks

The **key operational risks** that were identified this year related to an increase in deaths from accidental fires in dwellings, updating operational policies and making key information available at the incident ground, and progressing with populating the community risk modelling computer software used by the Service.

The **key non-operational risks** that were identified related to strengthening performance management in the Service, assessing sustainability and equalities issues, developing Information and Communications Technology systems, the financial standing of the Authority and improving scrutiny and Member engagement.

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Summarised Wording of Joint Risk Assessment 2007

The table below lists all the identified risks to the Authority, and how each one could be addressed.

Risk area	Risk of Potential failure to...	Inherent Risk category	Addressing the risk	Residual Risk category
Operational Preparedness	Retain operational effectiveness due to working to policies that have not been updated.	High	Ensure that up to date risk critical data information, is available at the incident ground. Call handling could also be enhanced by actively monitoring and reviewing these policies.	High
Sustainability	Ensure sustainability is fully embedded.	High	The Service has recognised the level of risk to delivery due to capacity of resources and budgets.	High
Equalities	Meet legislative equalities requirements.	High	Adopt and implement the Equalities Impact Assessment.	High
Risk analysis	Maintain an up-to-date corporate risk register and/or not keeping the community risk modelling software fully populated.	High	Ensure that both are maintained, which will assist in the embedding of risk in the Service.	Medium
Prevention and Protection	Ensure delivery of the objectives arising from the Chief Fire Officer's Task Group report.	High	Incorporate the findings of the Task Group report into the Community Safety Strategy	Medium
Performance Management and Measurement	Meet objectives with the Risk Reduction Plan due to a lack of a robust performance management framework.	High	The Wales Audit Office report on the performance management framework highlighted four recommendations that are being implemented by the Service.	Medium
e-fire and rescue	Maintain effective IT systems.	High	A Wales Audit Office review is already programmed to establish whether effective arrangements are in place to manage IT risk.	Medium
Financial Standing	Ensure robust financial management.	High	The Service is aware of its financial pressures and its need to maintain effective financial standing to ensure the delivery of the Service.	Medium

Risk area	Risk of Potential failure to...	Inherent Risk category	Addressing the risk	Residual Risk category
Risk analysis	Maintain an up-to-date Community Risk Register.	Medium	Maintaining the Community Risk Register is the Local Resilience Forum's role, but the Service can use its position to influence and maintain the direction of the Forum.	Medium
Risk analysis	Fully meet Welsh Assembly Government Circular standards.	Medium	Review response coverage through Risk Reduction Planning.	Medium
Prevention and Protection	Maintain currency of policies.	Medium	Review progress in delivery of fire prevention policies and amend relevant service administrative policy and procedure orders.	Medium
Operational Preparedness	Maintain the currency of plans if they are not regularly tested and reviewed.	Medium	Ensure that a Business Continuity plan is in place to comply with guidance under the Civil Contingencies Act	Medium
Call management and incident support	Meet response standards.	Medium	Ensure that service standards are kept under review in terms of operational response and policies adapted as required.	Medium
Making the Connections - Citizen at the Centre	Address the real needs of the community, partners and staff.	Medium	Continuing to strive to reach vulnerable and 'hard to reach' people, including through tackling reluctance among some agencies and organisations to share data and information.	Medium
Plans to Deliver the Vision	Deliver vision and priorities	Medium	Continuing to monitor and review current structures to ensure that they reflect external challenges and best practice	Medium
Understanding of external environment	Contribute fully to the wider public agenda.	Medium	Maintaining current level of awareness and improve where possible, in line with conclusions arising from the development of the updated Risk Reduction Plan and the Chief Fire Officer's Task Group report.	Medium

Risk area	Risk of Potential failure to...	Inherent Risk category	Addressing the risk	Residual Risk category
Management Structures	Put in place clear governance and management structures	Medium	Reorganisation of the Service has been completed and is showing effectiveness, but the Service recognises the need to build on this in terms of embedding the structure and adapting it when required in response to good practice and external developments	Medium
Roles and Responsibilities Members	Deliver changes to structures when needed and provide effective corporate management and support services.	Medium	Ensure that Members' attention is drawn to changes in measures and regulations that will impact on their roles and responsibilities, and meet development needs arising from these.	Medium
Responsiveness to external challenge	Deal with possible capacity issues around responding to external pressures.	Medium	Ensure that the work of the Task Group and the Risk Reduction Forum is collated and prioritized, to ensure that actions are implemented in the most effective manner.	Medium
Project Management	Co-ordinate in terms of delivery of policy and initiatives	Medium	Review project management systems to ensure compliance with recognised good practice	Medium
Risk Reduction Planning	Address risk.	Medium	Prioritising and finding possible areas where resources can be released can limit potential capacity issues.	Medium
Risk Reduction Planning	Fully embed risk in the organisation.	Medium	Embed engagement across the organisation and developing a further understanding of the risk assessment process amongst staff.	Medium
HR Management and Making the Connections - Engaging the workforce	Fully engage with the workforce.	Medium	A range of issues identified by the Service to ensure that the workforce is a fully engaged with the development of the Service as a modern and efficient Fire and Rescue Service.	Medium
Continuous Improvement	Meet objectives with the Risk Reduction Plan.	Medium	The Service has ambitious targets to deliver, and potential capacity issues remain. The agreement and support of the Authority will be crucial in developing the Service during 2007/08	Medium

Risk area	Risk of Potential failure to...	Inherent Risk category	Addressing the risk	Residual Risk category
Making the Connections - Working with others	Generate additional capacity and meet requirements of the Making the Connections agenda	Medium	Co-operation from other organisations, Local Service Boards, investment in systems, partnerships that are realistic and worthwhile, and effective use of resources for partnership working.	Low
Strategic Vision	Maintain clarity of vision	Low	Maintain momentum gained from the operational assessment and the development of the Risk Reduction Plan. The Service should consider if a longer time framework can be developed as part of the next Risk Reduction Planning process.	Low
Is the FRS a learning organisation	Learn from experience and improve.	Low	The Service's internal Risk Reduction Forum is bringing together the actions arising from the Operational Assessment with the actions outlined in the Risk Reduction Plan.	Low
Decision Making	Establish clear, effective decision making processes that can deliver the necessary changes and improvements; and enable difficult decisions to be made.	Low	The Service recognises the importance of the role of County Safety Managers in providing the main point of contact with County Councils	Low
Standards of conduct	Ensure clarity re required standards of conduct, and non compliance with WAG requirements.	Low	Systems are in place and are kept under review	Low
Roles and Responsibilities Officers	Maintain clarity over roles and responsibilities and associated capacity issues around responding to external pressures.	Low	Maintain current clarity regarding roles and responsibilities	Low
Making the Connections - Public engagement	Fully engage with the public.	Low	Maintaining current level of engagement with the public and establishing review procedures to ensure that learning is captured and used to improve existing practice and initiatives	Low

Risk area	Risk of Potential failure to...	Inherent Risk category	Addressing the risk	Residual Risk category
Health and Safety	Meet health and safety regulations.	Low	The Service has commenced a review of Health and Safety policy to reflect the current management structures.	Low
Property and Estates Management	Manage the estate.	Low	The service has an implemented AMP in place and a ongoing programme of works to buildings	Low
Financial Management	Ensure robust financial management.	Low	The Terms of Reference for the Executive Panel have been revised to receive and consider all Internal and External audit reports.	Low
Financial Statements	Ensure robust financial management	Low	The Service needs to maintain its current effective financial systems	Low

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SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS

We continuously seek to implement strategies that contribute to increased safety for the public and achieving excellence in the provision of all our services.

Nevertheless we identified some specific areas of activity that reflect our commitment to continuous improvement and the achievement of our aims and objectives. We listed these in our Improvement Plan last year, for action in 2007-08: although we have not yet reached the end of the year, this is the progress we have made since that time.

Planned Action	Progress Update
1) Increasing engagement with communities, particularly those in rural areas, to improve public safety.	<p>The Service has been delivering a significantly higher number of Home Fire Safety Checks this year, with additional focus on engaging with people across the Service area.</p> <p>In addition, contact is being made by letter and other means with all properties lying more than 20 minutes away from their nearest fire station to encourage the residents of those properties in particular to contact the Service to request a free Home Fire Safety Check.</p>
2) Taking advantage of opportunities to join forces with other agencies to secure improved public service delivery for north Wales.	<p>Formalised Data Sharing Protocols are being developed to enable referrals to be made by other caring agencies (e.g. Social Services) to the Fire and Rescue Service to help support vulnerable and therefore high risk people living in North Wales.</p> <p>Also, a number of joint initiatives are already up and running with North Wales Police, including facilities management and arson reduction. The relocation project for bringing the Fire and Rescue Control to premises already used by the Police Control is progressing well.</p>
3) Securing long term financial support to meet the public's expectations of what the Service can provide in terms of community fire prevention.	<p>This work, including seeking financial support from the Welsh Assembly Government, continues.</p>

Planned Action	Progress Update
4) Focusing attention on specific causes of dwelling fires, viz. unattended cooking, smoking materials and unprotected open fires.	Numerous campaigns, press coverage, public messages and Home Fire Safety Checks are all focusing on these.
5) Ensuring an appropriate distribution of rescue and extrication equipment across the whole of North Wales.	A three year programme of fitting front line fire engines with new rescue and extrication equipment is due to be completed during 2008-09.
6) Developing a co-ordinated strategy for improving road safety.	This work is in progress through an all-Wales group.
7) Assessing the feasibility of providing co-responding services following trials.	This is not currently being progressed, but remains an option for the future.
8) Improving resilience, in terms of both maintaining normal services in abnormal circumstances, and securing national and local resilience to major incidents.	<p>This work continues through the Local Resilience Forum and New Dimensions programme.</p> <p>Work relating to Business Continuity Management has also been completed, with ongoing monitoring and exercising planned.</p>
9) Ensuring the continued provision of excellent emergency Control Room and communications links.	This involves a range of ongoing projects associated with the relocation of the Control Room and the national radio replacement scheme.
10) Ensuring that the Service can continue to deal with the effects of adverse environmental and climatic changes, without itself contributing to their increase.	<p>Climate change affects the type, frequency and severity of incidents that the Service responds to (e.g. grass fires at times of dry weather, and flooding at times of heavy rainfall). The Service continuously seeks to ensure that it has sufficient resources to continue to respond.</p> <p>In terms of its own contribution, the Authority has now signed up to the Welsh Commitment to Address Climate Change.</p>

Planned Action	Progress Update
11) Ensuring that the Service meets the needs of all sections of the community, and that its workforce reflects the diversity of people that make up the local population.	This continues through the Service's Equalities and Welsh Language Schemes.
12) Reviewing the Service's partnerships to check that they are both ethical and effective.	This remains to be completed.
13) Developing the performance management framework in response to government-led changes to improvement planning, incorporating risk reduction and operational assurance.	This is work in progress, having already gone through the first cycle of operational assurance that fed into the Joint Risk Assessment. The Service has already moved towards a new annual planning cycle (ahead of the publication of Welsh Assembly guidance) that incorporates Improvement and Risk Reduction Planning.
14) Improving the provision of occupational health services for staff.	This is work in progress.
15) Investing in the training and development of all those involved in the delivery of excellent fire and rescue services in North Wales.	The new processes of the Integrated Personal Development System are still being embedded, with improvements continuously being made through the Skills, Learning and Development Centre.
16) Ensuring that staffing levels at different times reflect the predicted levels of demand for services.	Changes to day crewing hours to match the predicted times of higher demand have now been implemented and evaluated.

MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE

Another far-reaching change for the Fire and Rescue Service in Wales is the introduction of a new set of National Strategic and Core Indicators, to take effect from 2007-08, and to have statutory status from 2008-09.

Since devolution of responsibility for fire and rescue services in Wales to the National Assembly, Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities have continued to compile and publish broadly the same set of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) as used by Fire and Rescue Authorities in England – thirty six in total.

In Welsh County Councils, a new set of BVPIs, called 'National Strategic Indicators' and an additional set of 'Core Indicators' have already been applied, but the same process of development and application of new indicators for Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales is still being progressed by the Assembly, working with a stakeholder group from the three Services. The intention is to formalize arrangements for the new set by Order before the end of 2007. In the meantime Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to start using the draft set of fifty-three indicators from 1st April 2007, and to be subject to the statutory National Strategic Indicators from 1st April 2008.

The **National Strategic Indicators** are intended to allow authorities to quantify and report their contribution to major all-Wales policy objectives. Once the Order has come into effect, Fire and Rescue Authorities will be under a legal duty to collect and report on all of these indicators. End-of-year results will have to be included in their annual Improvement Plans and to undergo formal external audit.

To support these National Strategic Indicators, **Core Indicators** will be introduced to give a more rounded picture of the Fire and Rescue Authority's performance. Although authorities are required to compile data for these core indicators accurately, they have more flexibility in relation to the frequency, timing and format of their publication.

Furthermore, Fire and Rescue Authorities are not required to routinely subject this data to external audit in the same way as they do for the National Strategic Indicators. Core indicators are intended to evolve over time, and without the need for legislative change. The intention is that this set should be comparable over time and across Wales, and will support authorities (and regulators) in identifying where there is room to improve and equally where there is scope to share good practice.

Before 1st April 2008, therefore, we expect to receive confirmation of the final set, and work will be undertaken within the Service to:

- define key areas of performance that can be assessed through core indicators
- agree those of the BVPIs that will be retained as local indicators
- set up relevant targets and

- compile historical data where that is available.

Performance against the new suite of indicators will be reported for the first time in 2008-09.

Welsh Assembly Government Service Standard for Fires in the Home

Arrival within 10 minutes

In March 2006, the Welsh Assembly Government issued a service standard that committed it to ensuring that 80% of all dwellings in Wales would be located close enough to a fire station (or alternative centre) to be sure of getting an attendance within 10 minutes in the event of a fire. The distance that can theoretically be reached within 10 minutes will be mapped using Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) modelling software, allowing time within the 10 minutes for fire crews to respond, and taking account of local roads and access.

Fire and Rescue Services will be reporting against this standard in future, showing the percentage of times fire appliances had reached fires in dwellings located within the circumscribed areas in 10 minutes or sooner, aiming to achieve 100% compliance with what has been mapped as being theoretically possible.

Arrival within 5 minutes

FSEC software can also be used to predict the likelihood of fires occurring, based on a number of factors including fires that have occurred previously in the area. Where this is the case, areas are to be mapped to show how far fire appliances could theoretically reach within 5 minutes, and a comparison made between actual arrival times and theoretical arrival times.

Additional support to prevent fires

For properties that lie outside the circumscribed areas, meaning that they cannot be reached within 10 minutes of a call being made to the Control Room, then additional support must be offered to try to prevent fires from starting in the first instance.

Other Local Performance Indicators (i.e. those in addition to retained BVPIs)

Welsh Language:

The Service launched its revised Welsh Language Scheme for 2006-09, and reiterated the Authority's commitment to treating the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality. The Scheme includes sections on service delivery, public image, the workforce and third parties. It also summarises its

improvement plans, and lists local performance indicators for monitoring progress towards improvement.

- The number and % of emergency calls that were successfully dealt with in Welsh
- The number and % of staff who have bilingual skills (to the designated standard)
- The number and % of staff who have received training in Welsh to an agreed qualification level
- The number and % of staff who have received language awareness training
- The number and % of staff within the service who can speak Welsh - by department, by job grade, by the workplace.
- The number and % of main reception roles that were designated Welsh essential and were filled by bilingual staff
- The proportion and number of jobs where Welsh is essential that are filled by staff that have bilingual skills (to the designated standard)
- The proportion and number of jobs where Welsh is desirable that are filled by staff that have bilingual skills (to the designated standard)
- The number of complaints from sources not including staff or their representatives about the implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme and the % of complaints that were dealt with, in accordance with the standards set by the Authority.
- The number of complaints from staff or their representatives about language issues.
- The performance set against any target that is adopted as part of the performance management framework
- The number of agencies and contractors that receive guidance to comply with the Service's Welsh Language Scheme.

Community Fire Safety:

- The number of Home Fire Safety Checks delivered.

IMPROVEMENT TARGETS IN 2007-08

Since the introduction of Best Value Performance Indicators, targets have been set against each one annually, ostensibly to focus the Service towards securing improvement. However, in practice, there has been a tendency to set targets without necessarily being clear about how to achieve them, focussing instead on defining a target as simply a number.

The anticipated introduction of the Wales Programme for Improvement and the new set of National Strategic and Core Indicators gives an opportunity to review how the Authority sets improvement targets for the Service, and how resources can be released and/or redirected to achieve improvement in clearly defined areas.

The requirement in the draft guidance for planning for continuous improvement as part of the Wales Programme for Improvement is that Fire and Rescue Authorities should set performance targets, including for efficiency gains which *'must consist of genuine and sustainable changes to business practices which either yield cash savings or allow more or better services to be provided for the same resource output'* (para. 3.16).

Nationally, too, extensive development of strategies such as those relating to Road Safety and Human Resources are still in progress, as well as the root and branch review of the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services in Wales document. In this transitional year, therefore, the focus necessarily continues to be on the achievement of longer term and high level, strategic targets.

Fire Deaths

The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration stated in 2003 that it was the Assembly Government's target to reduce deaths in fires by between 30% and 50% in the following five years. Since then, the Assembly has clarified that the baseline figures that will be used to assess the progress of Fire and Rescue Authorities against this ambitious target will be the figures for the calendar year 2004 when there were a total of 26 fire deaths in Wales (21 were as a result of accidental fires and 5 as a result of deliberate fires).

Arson

Deliberate fires create significant risk to lives, businesses and the economy, schools and other community activity, the natural environment and heritage sites. A team from both Police and Fire working together are helping to tackle this issue across North Wales. An all-Wales Arson Reduction Strategy is being developed to co-ordinate and add impetus to the work being undertaken.

Home Fire Safety Checks

Following the unacceptably high number of fire deaths in North Wales last year, there has been a substantial increase in Community Fire Safety activity, with an initial target of 30,000 Home Fire Safety Checks per annum having been set.

Furthermore, an increased focus on developing ways to receive and respond to referrals and requests for Home Fire Safety Checks by or on behalf of individuals is being formalised in accordance with the Wales Accord for the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI).

Smoke detector ownership

Although it is impossible to know precisely how many homes in North Wales have a fitted, working smoke detector installed, a proxy indicator relates to the number of domestic fires attended where a smoke alarm activated. A long term target of 100% has therefore been set.

Malicious False Alarms

Acknowledging the risk-raising effect of attending malicious false alarms, the Service seeks to reduce the number being received each year, and to recognise the call as being a malicious false alarm before any resources are sent out to it on at least 75% of occasions.

Automatic Fire Alarm False Alarms

Repeat and nuisance false alarms from non-domestic premises increase risk and waste fire and rescue service resources. A target reduction of 10% is still in effect.

Sickness Absence

Challenging targets for an average of 6.5 working days/shifts lost per wholetime firefighter were set a few years ago by the UK government. This target that was initially set for achievement by 2005 has been adopted across the whole Service, and remains in force.

Ill-health Retirements

As a balance to the target for reducing sickness absence, a national target for ill-health retirements was also set for achievement initially by 2005 to 6.9 retirements per thousand employees.

Section 4

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2008-09

A SUMMARY OF THE AUTHORITY'S RISK REDUCTION PLAN ACTION PLAN 2008-09

According to issued guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government, the Objectives of Risk Reduction Planning are:

In order for fire and rescue authorities to achieve the targets of the Welsh Assembly Government they must establish a strategy aimed at:

- Reducing the number of fires and other emergency incidents
- Reducing the loss of life in fires and other emergency incidents
- Reducing the number and severity of injuries in fires and other emergency incidents
- Reducing the commercial, economic and social impact of fires and other emergency incidents
- Safeguarding the environment and heritage, both built and natural
- Providing services that are Value for Money (VFM) and
- Integrating the activities of their Service within the wider social justice agenda.

At the top of both the Welsh Assembly's list of objectives and the Fire and Rescue Authority's list of aims for the Service, the primary focus is on achieving a reduction in the number of emergency incidents occurring.

'Prevention is better than cure' has been the principal theme running through all the Authority's risk reduction strategies from the outset. The primary strategy in North Wales is one of delivering fire prevention activity in the community.

However, it is also recognised that to do this will require a large investment of resources. The Authority is aware of the need to find these resources from within existing budgets, and acknowledges that efficiencies will need to be made in order to release resources from one service area to contribute to those needed by another service area, but without adversely affecting the delivery of front-line services to the communities of North Wales.

The Authority developed and published its first Risk Reduction Plan in 2006. The main priorities for North Wales Fire Authority were identified as being:

IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY RISKS	IDENTIFIED CORPORATE RISKS
<p>Deaths and injuries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fire related deaths and injuries ● Road traffic collisions causing deaths and injuries ● Properties and their remoteness from resources ● Lives at risk in the community 	<p>Capacity to deliver services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Modernising the Fire and Rescue Service ● Sustaining partnership working ● Performance management ● Employee health and development ● Funding arrangements
<p>Fire and emergency incidents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Performance ● Automatic Fire Alarms ● Children and young people with a fascination for fire ● Deliberate fire setting ● Properties and their remoteness from resources ● Service standards 	<p>Resilience in service delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Human resources ● Business continuity ● Call handling and dispatch ● Communications ● Information Technology ● Assurance of operational intervention ● Resilience of suppliers ● Reputation
<p>Community resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preparedness ● Identification of community risks ● Multi-agency planning ● Protecting local communities using UK resources 	<p>Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developing the Fire and Rescue Authority ● Financial controls ● Legal services ● Procurement of goods and services ● Corporate social responsibility ● Legal compliance
<p>Environmental impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Climate change ● Spate conditions ● Intervention techniques ● Economic and social impact 	
<p>Community engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CFS education and prevention ● Communications ● Welsh language ● Equality and diversity 	

The issued guidance required that Risk Reduction Plans (or an annual action plan flowing from it) should:

- Address the issue of reducing both corporate and community risk;
- Be subjected to wide consultation for at least 12 weeks;
- Be produced with regard to Assembly Government guidance, policies and strategies;
- Be based on robust and reliable data clearly linked to identified corporate and community risks; and
- Be discussed with the Assembly Government prior to consultation and prior to its formal adoption by the Fire and Rescue Authority.

Over the summer months of 2007, therefore, the Authority consulted on four inter-linked proposals for taking forward plans to address identified risks into 2008-09. The high level proposals are shown below:

Consultation Proposal 1 – To increase fire prevention

The Authority's main proposal for 2008-09 was to place renewed and additional emphasis on preventing fires, particularly those that present the greatest risk to life.

This would entail conducting significantly more home fire safety checks in homes in North Wales, fitting more smoke alarms and other protective equipment as necessary.

For the Service to achieve its aim of conducting 30,000 home fire safety checks per year in homes across North Wales, the Authority would need to make additional investment in areas such as:

- generating requests and referrals for free home fire safety checks, particularly for the most vulnerable people;
- making sure that there are effective business and computerised systems for delivering and recording information about home fire safety checks;
- making sure that the Service has sufficient trained personnel to undertake the challenging programme of home fire safety checks.

Consultation Proposal 2 – To introduce registration of Fire Alarm Systems

The Authority was seeking to introduce a more robust policy to reduce the number of times the Service is called to attend false alarms generated by automatic fire alarms installed in buildings. Apart from wasting time and money, the risk to the public is increased because crews are unavailable to undertake prevention work or to respond to genuine emergencies. The Authority therefore proposed to initiate a consultation to progressively introduce a registration programme for automatic fire alarm systems, so that it could identify and stop the worst offenders from generating repeat false alarms

Consultation Proposal 3 – To release resources by more efficient use of staff time

Finding enough money to pay for additional prevention activity from within existing budgets would require making more efficient use of staff time. Early

analysis suggested that resources could be released whilst maintaining - or even improving - front line services.

The Authority proposed to do this by carefully introducing two major changes over the next few months:

a) by introducing a different way of rostering. This is the way wholetime firefighters are allocated to each team ('watch'), and by changing the pattern by which each team comes on and off duty. This would not reduce the number of firefighters that arrive at an emergency incident, nor would it increase the number of hours that wholetime firefighters are expected to work in a year. In fact, by being better organised in the way the Service covers for staff absences and recruitment difficulties in areas covered by retained firefighters, this change would also help to make sure that fire engines are never out of action because of a lack of a full crew.

b) by developing a 'Dedicated Response Option'. Analysis has shown that although the Authority pays a premium to a number of middle and senior managers to be available to attend and oversee crews at emergency incidents, it is almost unheard of that the Service would actually need to call them all simultaneously. The Service simply doesn't need that many to be on duty at the same time. Senior managers would still attend every incident where they were required (exactly as happens now), but the Authority would be reducing the number that are paid to be on standby knowing that there is realistically no chance of them actually being called out.

Consultation Proposal 4 – To invest in Performance Management Systems

To do this the Service would need to redesign its internal processes and invest further in risk management. By doing so the Authority would be able to deliver a more efficient service to the people of North Wales.

Having considered the responses from the consultation, the Authority decided that...

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED IN LINE WITH FIRE AUTHORITY

DECISION IN 15TH OCTOBER 2007 MEETING.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Welsh Assembly Government has set a target of £600m recurring value for money improvements (efficiency gains) across the Welsh public sector by 2010 for the purpose of freeing up resources for use in delivering further improvements in public services.

The Assembly's view is that the identification of value for money improvements requires a reassessment and challenge of existing processes and services to consider whether anything can be done differently to achieve improvements and whether better use can be made of resources.

Suggested areas where efficiencies could potentially be made by Authorities relate to:

- **Smarter procurement** - efficiencies achieved during the procurement of goods and services
- **Streamlining support functions** - efficiencies achieved by simplifying and standardising business processes and possibly using Information Communications Technology in doing so,
- **Shaping public services** - efficiencies achieved by reshaping services, making best use of assets and reducing the cost of maintaining services.
- **Better use of staff time, skills and expertise** - efficiencies from changes to staff contracts leading to productivity gains, improving attendance rates and using Information Communications Technology to release productive time.

Revenue spending

The 2007-08 revenue budget of £29.5million is made up of:

	£ million	% of budget
Wholetime firefighters and officers	15	51.0%
Firefighters on Retained Duty System	4.7	16.0%
Control staff	1.0	3.4%
Support staff	2.2	7.4%
Training	0.3	1.0%
Premises	1.0	3.4%
Transport	1.0	3.4%
Supplies and Services	2.3	7.7%
Funding capital	2.0	6.7%
Totals	29.5	100.00%

	ACTUAL 2005-06	TARGET 2006-07	ACTUAL 2006-07	Improved?	On target?
Expenditure per head of population	41.30	43.95	44.41	-	No

Section 5

STATEMENT RELATING TO CONTRACTS

Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Public Sector Service Contracts.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority states and certifies that no individual contracts have been awarded during the past year involving transfer of staff where the above Code of Practice would apply.

Section 6

NOTES AND SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

Population and property figures:

The National Statistics 'Statistics for Wales' Bulletin SB/40/2007 published 22 August 2007, reports the 2006 mid-year estimate as 675,700. StatsWales website table 3122 reports the 2006 mid year estimate as 675,563.

However, for consistency with previous years, and given that this set of BVPIs is to be discontinued shortly, calculation figures used are those from the latest CIPFA Fire and Rescue Service Statistics publication (2006) –

Population 670,800, Domestic properties 299,131, Non-domestic properties 26,743.

Following audit, BV12 and BV17a figures for 2005-06 were amended in November 2006.

Useful web addresses for further information:

www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk for information relating to North Wales Fire and Rescue Service

www.wales.gov.uk for information relating to fire and rescue services in Wales

www.communities.gov.uk for information relating to fire and resilience in England and other parts of the UK

www.scotland.gov.uk for information relating to fire services in Scotland

www.nifrs.org/ for information relating to fire and rescue services in Northern Ireland

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