

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
DATE: 7TH SEPTEMBER 2022
REPORT OF: HEAD OF OPERATIONAL POLICY AND ASSURANCE
AUTHOR: SM TAM BLAIR

SUBJECT: NORTH WEST FIRE CONTROL – ANNUAL
REPORT 2021-22

Purpose of Report

1. To inform members about the performance of North West Fire Control (NWFC) during the year 2021-22 (1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022).

Recommended: That

- [1] Members note the performance information relating to NWFC.

Background

2. This report is based on the Quarterly Performance Management reports produced by NWFC.

Information

Call handling performance

3. The following headings deal with the call handling performance, costs of service, staff performance, staffing levels and business continuity. These are the agreed performance measures reported for the four Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) for whom NWFC provides control room functions.
4. The total number of emergency and admin calls received by NWFC for all 4 FRS's.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Emergency Calls	42,961	43,583	38,584	37,462	162,590
Admin Calls	29,226	29,432	29,364	29,507	117,377

5. Performance from 2019-20 and 2020-21 showed a 6% decrease in emergency calls. Performance between 2020-21 and 2021-22 saw a rise of 19%. This increase was in part due to Covid-19 creating a false reduction in calls in 2020-21 due to the impact of lockdown. The two incident types seeing the biggest increases are Road Traffic Collisions up 64.8% (147 incidents) compared to 2020-21 (Covid-19 travel restrictions in place) and NWAS Gain Entry incidents up 41.1% (67 incidents).
6. Call volume across the region was impacted by back-to-back storms with Storms Franklin and Eunice in Q4.

Call challenging

7. Control Room Operatives (CRO's) are trained to challenge specific call types and ask additional questions to identify whether FRS attendance is required. These include Automatic Fire Alarms, (AFA's) Animal Rescues, Bonfires and Gaining Entry incidents. The table below shows a breakdown by quarter of the number of calls that were challenged and their subsequent outcomes for all 4 FRS's.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Calls Challenged	9127	8361	9290	8026	34804
Mobilised	5286	4857	5496	4620	20259
Not Mobilised	3841	3504	3884	3406	14635
% Successfully challenged/not mobilised	42%	41.9%	41.8%	42.4%	42%

8. The call challenge data reports on incidents where CRO's have to run the formal call challenges. These related to automatic fire alarms, NWAS gain entry and bonfire incident types where pre-mobilising screening is required prior to mobilising.
9. The majority of non-mobilisations relate to calls from AFAs where approximately half of all calls received do not generate a service attendance. The success of the call challenge protocols introduced by the service has prompted neighbouring services to implement similar arrangements.

Time to answer Emergency Calls

10. A national target was set by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), and it is against this target that NWFC has been reporting. A target of 95% of emergency calls should be answered in 10 seconds, or less.

11. Performance for all 4 FRS's is shown in the table below.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Average Time to Answer	5 seconds	6 seconds	6 seconds	6 seconds
Percentage of calls answered within 10 seconds	93%	93%	93%	93%

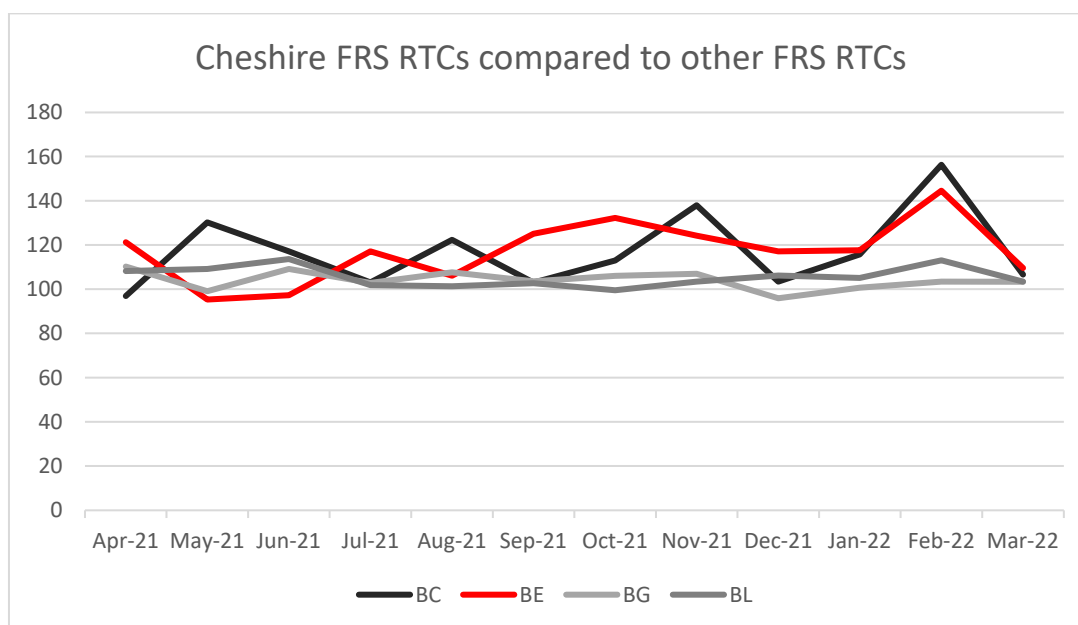
12. A significant proportion of the 7% of calls where NWFC failed to meet the 10s standard was largely due to spate conditions. NWFC operates the Automatic Call Distribution (ACD), this is a system that identifies the CRO who has been in ACD the longest and assigns them the call. The call sits with the CRO for 5s, and if the call is not answered it is redirected to all CRO's via a sounder in the room. Reasons why the call may not be immediately taken is CRO's completing other key tasks such as working through Action Plans. Another contributing factor is during spate conditions when calls spill over into our buddy control rooms. Performance is monitored by NWFC through 1-2-1's and the appraisal process.

Time of Call Answer to Time of Alerting the First Resource

13. The target set is for resources to be mobilised within 90 seconds of a call being answered. Data shown in paragraph 15 shows call handling performance.
14. It should be noted that different incident types require differing amounts of information to be taken during the call handling processes to ensure correct mobilisation.
15. Performance is shown in the table over (average in seconds) for Cheshire Incidents only. The table below shows a measure of all 'attended' incidents. Incident types that don't require an immediate emergency response i.e., an incident where a NILO is consulted prior to mobilisation has been cleansed from this dataset.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ave
Ave for life risk incidents	93	99	102	85	94.5
Fires – CFRS	76	79	75.5	75.5	76.5
Special Service Calls – RTC's	110	119	129	115	118

16. The data (point 15) shows that NWFC did not meet the standard to alert resources in 90 seconds for RTC's on 64% of occasions for CFRS.



BC: Cumbria **BE: Cheshire** BG: Manchester BL: Lancashire

17. This is in part due to the challenge of identifying a location of the caller. It is frequent that the caller is unaware of their exact location, and often there is no postcode available. Motorways are a good example of this challenge.
18. Steps to improve NWFC performance to improve call handling time for RTC's
- CRO training has been updated to reinforce the 2-stage mobilisation process. Stage 1 is to mobilise to the address and Stage 2 is getting and passing additional information.

- All CRO's have 2 call audits per month. In Q2 2022-23 this will focus on Cheshire RTC's.
 - An incident tag has been placed on the mobilising system. This tag will require a CRO to provide a reason the 90s standard was breached. A quarterly report will be run as part of the quarterly scrutiny process.
 - A new quarterly scrutiny process has now been fully embedded.
 - The introduction of the LifeX system (point 26) will improve location identification.
 - If the caller is completely lost the CRO's have now been asked to use 999eye to use the caller's phone GPS.
19. It should be noted that different incident types require differing amounts of information to be taken during the call handling processes to ensure correct mobilisation.
20. A regional review national sampling has been undertaken since the 2020-21 performance year, to consider how other organisations monitor and evaluate control room performance. The findings were not conclusive with no suitable processes identified. To improve the ability of CFRS to monitor and evaluate NWFC a quarterly scrutiny meeting of performance has now been implemented and a quarterly report being produced. This approach will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of this collaborative relationship.
21. A Monthly review of Ops Support activity has also been implemented to monitor the impact of the North West Fire and Rescue Services requests on NWFC.

Cost of Service

22. The cost of the service provided by NWFC is paid for in proportions agreed by the FRS's when NWFC was established.
23. The table over shows the percentage of all emergency call activity in each quarter per FRS area and then contains the overall percentage for the year compared to the cost paid by each FRS.

	Cheshire	Cumbria	Greater Manchester	Lancashire
Q1	17.57%	12.65%	39.10%	30.66%
Q2	19.89%	12.89%	36.48%	30.72%
Q3	18.95%	14.01%	35.25%	31.78%
Q4	17.56%	13.03%	37.49%	31.90%
Overall Average	18.49%	13.14%	37.08%	31.26%
Annual Percentage Cost per FRS	18%	8%	48.5%	25.5%

N.B The overall average figures do not add up to 100 as there is a small proportion of 'other' calls that are not accounted for in the table.

New Technologies and Delivery of Projects

24. **999eye:** is a technical solution where NWFC can use a caller's smart mobile phone to view the incident being reported. Benefits include improving NWFC's understanding of the nature of the call, enhancing a response, and mobilising right resources to resolve the incident successfully and safely. Other benefits include using the phones GPS to identify the location of the incident more quickly. This is now in its implementation phase for CFRS.
25. **RRRU:** On 1st June 2022 the new RRRU response went live at NWFC which will improve CFRS response to those locations that are more remote. Currently, these resources are set up to attend Road Traffic Collision Incident Types. The next phase will bring Poynton and Bollington on-line with additional skill attributes pertaining to Wildfire and Animal Rescue. This project has been delivered.
26. **Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) power app:** An electronic solution to enhance CFRS and NWFC ability to co-ordinate major incidents such as high-rise fires where there are multiple calls received at NWFC from people in need of rescue. NWFC can update the app, and as this is live can be seen immediately on the incident ground so Incident Commanders can target a response in real time. This will build on the implemented evacuation process based on learning from the Grenfell Tower fire. This system is being explored currently.
27. **LifeX:** NWFC have now upgraded the telephony system and the way we identify a callers' location (down to 1 metre). Additionally, NWFC utilise What3Words and 999eye to support quick location identification. This system has been implemented.

Staff Performance

28. Service staff regularly attend NWFC. Their observations form an important aspect of performance monitoring as they can take a view about aspects of the service provided by NWFC that are not measured statistically, e.g., the approach to call handling. There is close working for significant events and during certain periods, e.g., major disruption such as flooding and the bonfire period. NWFC continue to work well with the vast majority of calls leading to the correct mobilisation of resources. Systems and people are fully tested when conditions are the most challenging and staff at NWFC worked well on each occasion. There are clear channels through which to communicate feedback between operational crews within the service and staff in NWFC
29. NWFC continues to take the training and improvement of the skills of its staff very seriously. This is evident from the management and integration of new starters and approach to the ongoing maintenance and improvement of skills. NWFC now use the same Competence Management and eLearning system as the service, PDRPro.
30. New Control Room Operator Development pathways
 - **Phase 1:** This is the first 4 weeks and is classroom based
 - **Phase 2:** Staff are allocated to their teams and assigned a mentor and stay in this phase for 11 months.
 - **Phase 3:** Enter the development to competence pathway.
31. Prior to moving phases, the staff are assessed against the 'Safe to Operate' criteria which contains a 9-point criteria, that underpin the National Occupational Standards. There is a robust development and mentoring process to support staff who don't meet the required benchmark
32. NILO Courses for Operations Managers: This is a new skill being embedded at NWFC to support an effective and efficient response to incidents such as Marauding Terrorism Incidents (MTA)
33. Staff absence: Absence was 7.39 shifts lost per person (7.82 in 2020-21).

Key training delivered

34. In 2021-22 the service has worked in partnership with Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) in the provision of training at NWFC in relation to improving NWFC performance during an MTA incident.
35. The service has in partnership with GMFRS delivered MTA training to all the Teams at NWFC. This training focussed on the delivery and understanding of JESIP's 'Joint Operating Principles for the Emergency Services.'
36. The service has built on this training in the organisations implementation of change based on the Kerslake recommendations. The service has planned, implemented and delivered bespoke MTA exercises in phases 1 and 2. Phase 3 will deliver four no-notice MTA scenarios for all the NWFC teams

(consolidating the aforementioned training); this will culminate in a major live scenario. All the exercises are a tri-service collaboration with Cheshire Police and North West Ambulance Service, and for the major live exercise with the Tactical Firearms team.

37. Performance statistics are also considered by Team Leaders so that they can see how well their team members are performing and where additional help or training may be required. Individual performance also provides evidence for appraisals and is considered when performance related pay is determined.
38. This year, the National Operational Guidance Programme (NOGP) run by the NFCC programme team has initiated their Control Room project, which will provide a set of standards and practices that all Control Rooms in the country can utilise to develop internal policies, procedures and training packages.
39. There is the potential for change at NWFC due to the recommendations and inquiries pertaining to the Grenfell Tower Incident and the Manchester Arena Inquiry (and supporting Kerslake report). NWFC has supported the arena inquiry as the regional control centre for GMFRS.
40. The Fit for the Future review has been completed. A new consultant has been appointed to support the change management process. They will review current arrangements and recommend the job description for a new partnership manager role. They will have responsibility for areas including the procurement of a new mobilising system and a review of staffing models.
41. The new JESIP training principles have been embedded within the control room at NWFC. A bespoke NWFC trainer has been recruited and co-ordinates with the service JESIP based principles.

Business Continuity

42. Two full 'Business Continuity' exercises have been carried out at NWFC during the reporting period. Both exercises took place whilst there was a complete shut down of the mobilising system, necessitated by a requirement to complete essential updates.
43. The service fed back the need to review the NWFC Business Continuity Plan. The service will support NWFC in this review in 2022-23.
44. As a result of HMICFRS feedback NWFC and the Business Continuity planning group will undertake a full fallback exercise to secondary control at Stretford Fire Station in the current performance year 2022-23.
45. NWFC has operated a full service throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic, adopting remote working practices to maintain close liaison with the service and ensure that the needs of our organisation continue to be met.

Financial Implications

46. None resulting from the information in the report.

Legal Implications

47. None resulting from the information in the report. An agreement for services exists between the Authority and NW Fire Control Ltd. This provides a framework for managing the relationship.

Equality and Diversity Implications

48. Equality Impact Assessment for the 999eye project has been undertaken and approved by the Equality and Inclusion Manager.

Environmental Implications

49. None.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE