



# Making Cheshire Safer

## Annual Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report 2016/17



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# Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2016 – 2017

## 1. Summary

Health and Safety (H&S) is an important, integral element of everything that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service does; it is a fundamental aspect of the management of all of its activities. This applies equally to its responsibilities as a frontline emergency service in protecting local communities as well in its role as a key local employer.

This annual report highlights the improvements over the last 12 months in H&S when measured by the number and severity of accidents reported, time lost as a result of injury accidents and proactive measures taken to improve our H&S performance; it also reports an increase in the number of vehicle accidents for the first time in several years.

Key issues to note include:

- A decrease in the number of minor accidents reported to the Service.
- A sustained decrease in the number of duty days lost as a result of accidents.
- A prompt, proactive response to the Coroners Regulation 28 letter following the inquest into the death of FF Stephen Hunt in Manchester.
- Gaining a British Safety Council International Safety Award for the eighth consecutive year.
- The prompt, decisive action to remedy a potentially serious issue identified following the upgrade of the breathing apparatus sets issued to firefighters.

## 2. Background

In addition to the challenges posed by the continued economic climate to the Service and how it delivers its statutory responsibilities there have been significant changes to structure as a result of the Blue Light Collaboration Programme. Against this backdrop the Service has remained committed to continue to operate safely and to look for a continuous improvement in its H&S performance and the well being of its employees, volunteers and cadets.

Good H&S management supports the efficiency of the Service by reducing both the direct and indirect costs associated with accidents, work related ill health and damage to plant and equipment.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has continued its review of health and safety legislation and guidance as part of the government drive to reduce bureaucracy and the burden on UK businesses. This has resulted in regular changes to legislation and guidance; these changes must be reflected in our H&S management systems and how we manage the H&S of our staff.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Section monitors changes to national legislation and guidance and ensures that our policies and procedures remain compliant with the guidance on legislation issued by both HSE and DCLG and CFA. We also consider reports resulting from fatal or serious accidents in other Fire and Rescue Services to identify any lessons that we may need to learn and that these are reflected in our operational procedures.

The Service has contributed to national consultations on changes to legislation and guidance where these changes may have an impact on our operations and the health and safety of our staff.

### **3. Key Achievements**

The Service submitted its Safety Management System (SMS) for a British Safety Council International Safety Award and for the eighth time it was successful. The SMS was evaluated by an independent panel against set criteria including reactive and proactive performance measures, enforcement action and civil claims taken against the Service. This continued success demonstrates that the Service's H&S management system remains fit for purpose and has continued to improve, meeting the aim set out in our H&S Policy.

The H&S section has provided training courses to 19 of the Service's Princes Trust Teams (PTT) during the year. These courses are based on the British Safety Council (BSC) Level 2 award in Health and Safety but tailored to the needs and learning styles of the team members. The course includes an examination that contributes to National Vocational Qualifications and during the year has provided 201 trainees with a basic H&S qualification to add to their CV.

The Service has continued to deliver Managing Safely courses for our staff with a 100% success rate in the examinations. We have continued to respond to requests from both North West Fire Control and local businesses to provide this training for members of their staff.

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) requires the Service to report certain classes of accident, work related illness and specified dangerous occurrences to the HSE. We reported 6 incidents under these regulations; 4 of these were as a result of injuries to staff and two as a result of breathing apparatus incidents that fall within the dangerous occurrences reporting requirements. So as to allow comparison with the years prior to 2013 when the reporting requirements changed we also track injury accidents that result in more than 3 days absence from work. When these are included the number of injury related RIDDOR reports increases to 6, nevertheless this represents a sustained, high performance for this class of incident.

#### **4. Accident rates**

The Reportable Accident Rate (RAR) is the way in which HSE calculates accident rates for various industries, the rate is expressed as the number of accidents per 100,000 employees. Changes to HSE's statistics database mean it is difficult to compare the injury rates for the total number of staff in FRSs. However, it is possible to compare injuries to operational fire fighters. Of the RIDDOR injuries the Service reported, all four were to operational staff giving an RAR for 2016-17 of 450 compared to 244 for 2015-16. We did report two dangerous occurrence under these regulations; this related to the failure of BA sets. The average RAR for all FRSs in the North West is 803.

HSE's national statistics for 2016-17 are yet to be published, but the national rate for injuries to operational FRS staff in 2015-16 was 1227. The national RAR for all employers is 274 although the HSE recognise that, due to underreporting, this is artificially low. The Labour Force Survey (LFS), which is generally seen as more accurate, puts the national injury accident rate for this period at 621.

The Service did not have any RIDDOR accidents reported from non-operational staff therefore the RAR for the Service overall is 450, the same as last year; this is higher than the HSE national average but below both the LFS and FRS averages.

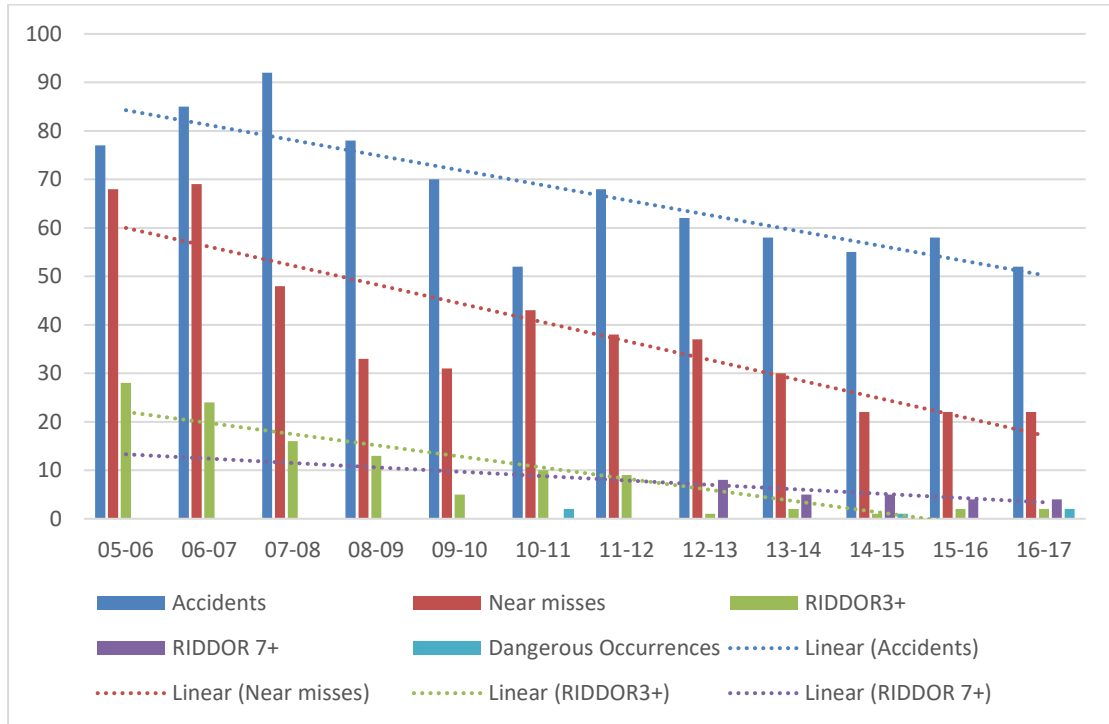
#### **5. Minor accidents and Near Misses**

The SharePoint based accident reporting system introduced last year to make the reporting and investigation of accidents easier and quicker is achieving its aim. Reports and investigations are being completed in a timelier manner; by the end of the reporting year 100% of accident investigations were completed within the deadline.

Figure 1 shows a comparison of the number of minor accidents, RIDDOR reports and near misses the Service has recorded each year since 2005. In 2016/17 the Service recorded 52 injury accidents to staff, a slight increase compared to 58 the previous year, 48 of these were minor accidents. The low numbers of near miss reports may reflect an improved safety culture, with staff more aware of their responsibilities for working safely and taking action to report damage or poor standards in the workplace.

The proactive programme of workplace inspections aimed at identifying and rectifying any issues which may contribute to workplace accidents could also be a factor. Importantly, when trend lines are applied to the graph they show a continued reduction in all types of unsafe, unwanted events across the Service.

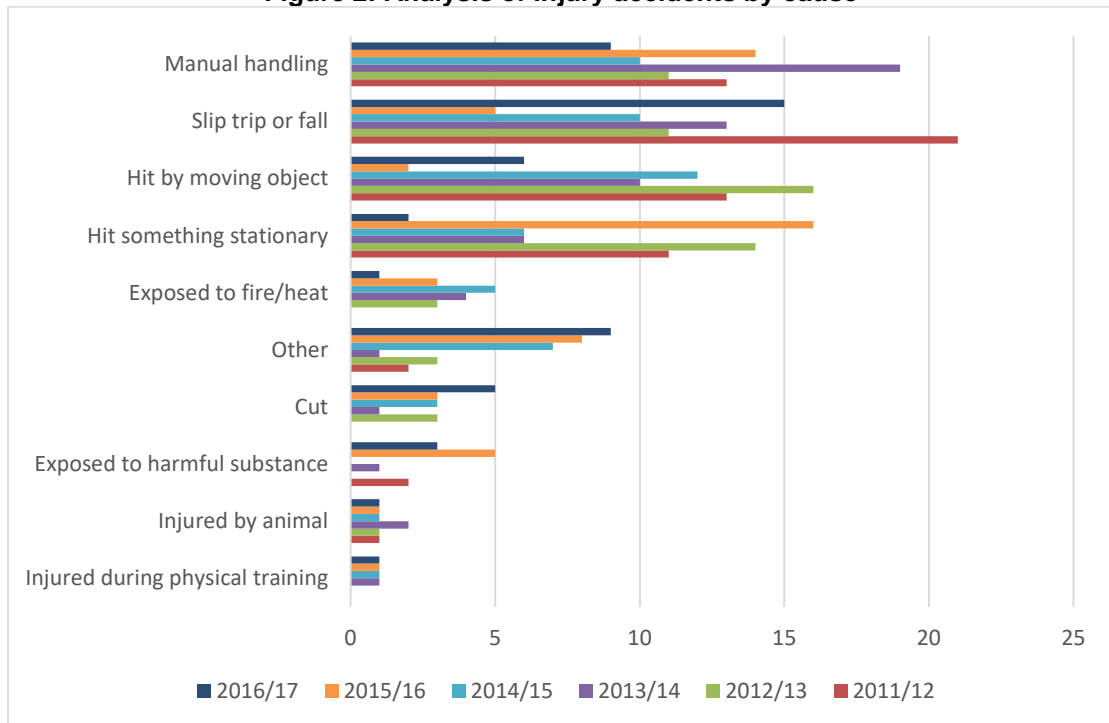
**Figure 1: Comparison of accidents numbers and trends 2005 – 2016**



## 6. Response to accident data

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of accidents in the Service by cause, comparative data is shown for the years since 2011/12.

**Figure 2: Analysis of injury accidents by cause**



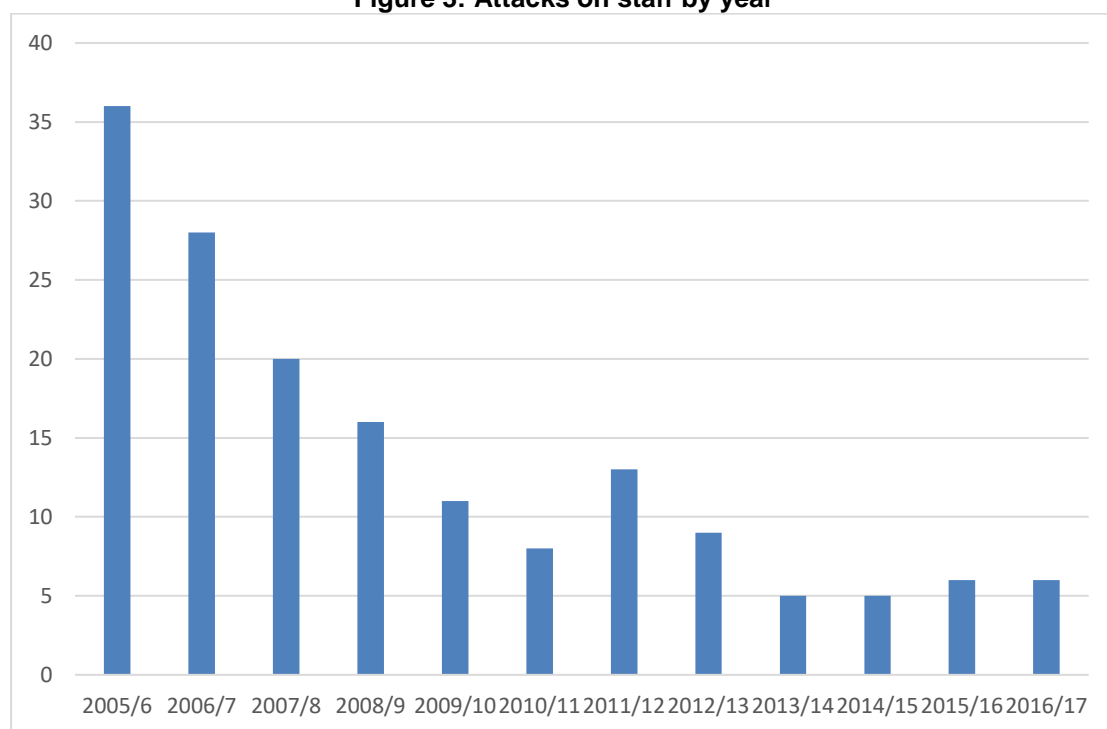
The analysis of the Service's accident reports in 2016-17 shows that most of the accidents were caused by slips trips and falls, with manual handling the next most common cause.

During 2016-17 the H&S section ran successful awareness campaigns to target the previous two causes of the greatest numbers of accidents to our staff. This resulted in a further reduction in injuries as a result of collisions with objects.

## 7. Violence and aggression towards staff

The Service recorded 6 incidents of violent and abusive behaviour towards staff (see figure 3) the same as the previous year; the figure includes 4 incidents that occurred in Princes Trust teams. The Service has continued to work to identify the locations where violence may occur and to engage with the local community to try to reduce the risk of violent and abusive behaviour.

Figure 3: Attacks on staff by year



This sustained performance compares well with other FRSs in the North West where the average number of attacks on staff in a year is 19 across the fire and rescue services.

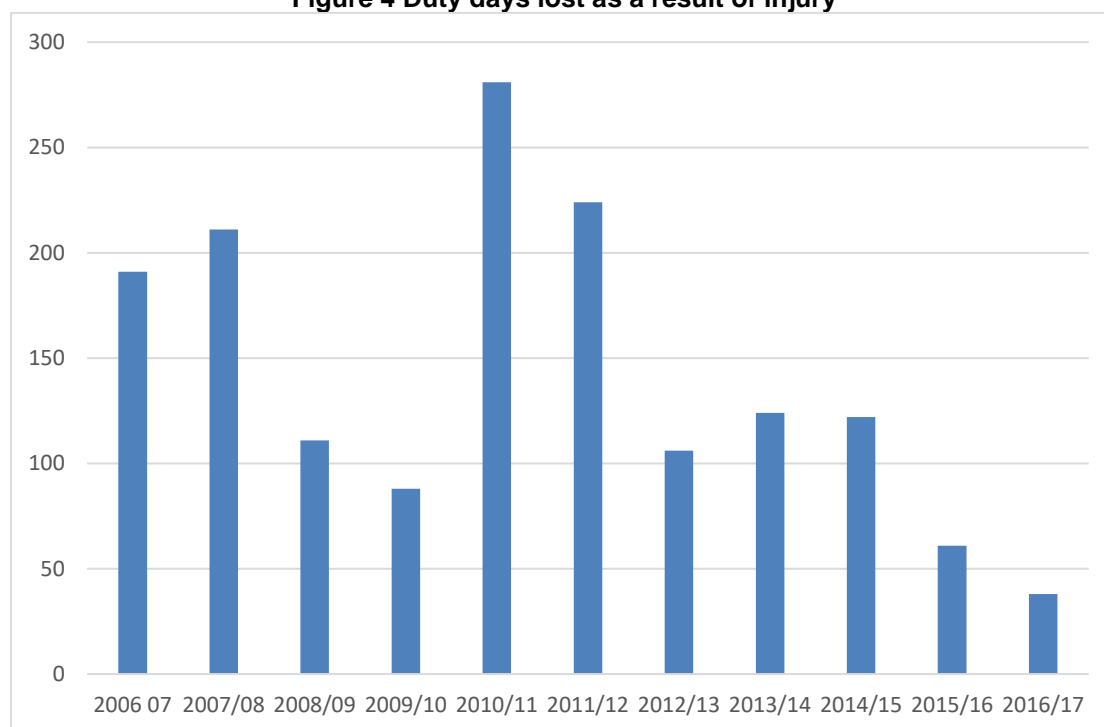
The Service will continue to collect information about violence and aggression towards firefighters and other employees and work to address the causes of this type of behaviour. When appropriate, we will report violent attacks to the police and provide evidence from the closed circuit television cameras mounted on appliances where practical.

## 8. Duty days lost as a result of injury accidents

As part of its accident reporting procedure the Service records the number of duty days lost as a result of accidents; this includes days lost to both serious accidents and those of a more minor nature. This data is one of the performance measures reported to the Government. The final figure for the previous year has been adjusted to reflect days lost in the current year as a result of injuries received in the previous year. The number of days lost as a result of injuries in the reporting year is 38. This is the second lowest in the North West with only the Isle of Man reporting fewer days lost and compares well nationally.

The percentage of sickness in the Service due to accidents at work was 2.13%; for whole time fire fighters (1.24% for support staff) this compares with more than 10% for whole time firefighters in some FRSs. Figure 4 shows the pattern for this data since 2006/07, there have been years when the number of days lost has been low, this probably reflects an absence of serious accidents as one fractured limb might result in more than 60 lost duty days. However, the data shows that there has been a continuous trend for a decrease in the time lost as a result of accidents.

**Figure 4 Duty days lost as a result of injury**



## 9. Vehicle accidents

The Service has seen an increase in the number of vehicle accidents – up from 50 to 76. The majority of these are of a minor nature and in 26 of the reports our vehicle was hit by another vehicle or object. The Service has a Road Risk Management Group, the purpose of which is to examine vehicle accident reports and introduce measures to drive down both the severity and numbers



of vehicle accidents and so reduce the risks to the Service that arise from the use of Service vehicles. There has been a sustained and successful campaign to reduce the number of incidents when Service vehicles have been driven in excess of the speed limit.

The Service has a programme of licence checks to ensure that drivers have the correct licences for the vehicles they drive and a program of retraining and accreditation for all blue light and LGV drivers. During the year the Service introduced Driver Risk Profiling to try to identify those drivers who are at higher risk of being involved in an accident and to challenge their behaviours.

Of the 76 vehicle accidents reported during the year, 9 occurred when fire engines were responding to emergency incidents under blue lights. The majority occurred when manoeuvring vehicles in narrow spaces, particularly some of the narrower domestic streets where there are often vehicles parked on both sides of the road.

The Service investigates all vehicle accident reports with a view to preventing a recurrence, while it also continues to invest in driver training and assessment to improve their skills. The Service has strict guidelines for reversing vehicles agreed with the representative bodies. Failure to follow these guidelines has resulted in disciplinary action against individuals.

Vehicle technicians ensure that Service vehicles are maintained and meet all the relevant road safety requirements and there is a requirement that the driver checks the vehicle before use to ensure that there are no problems that may affect its performance.

## **10. Claims and complaints**

In the last year the number of personal insurance claims made against the Service has remained low, most were as a result of minor injuries. The Service and its insurer have successfully contested a number of claims where it was felt we were not at fault.

## **11. Corporate Governance**

The Fire Authority continues to demonstrate its commitment to Health and Safety by appointing a dedicated Member Champion, while Principal Officers are provided with regular information about accidents, progress with personal injury insurance claims and other H&S related issues.

The results of internal H&S audits are shared with the Service Health Safety and Welfare Committee (SHSWC) which monitors the implementation of the action plans arising from these audits.

In addition the Service HSMS was again submitted to the British Safety Council's International Safety Award scheme and again achieved a merit award.

## **12. Risk management**

The SHSWC regularly reviews the H&S Risk register to ensure the high level H&S risks to the Service are being managed.

The Service has a process for ensuring that all of our H&S policies and procedures are reviewed and remain up to date. We monitor legislation to ensure that the policies reflect the latest legal requirements and when appropriate we comment on published drafts and consultations of proposed legislation.

All Service activities are subject to risk assessment. Significant risks and their associated controls are documented and subject to regular review. As a result of a review of the management of fire risk within the Service there has been a project to improve fire safety across all of our premises with the Emergency Evacuation Policy rewritten to include a wider range of emergencies.

The Service has continued with its program of random drug and alcohol testing; this has proved an effective both as a deterrent and as a tool for education. No staff tested positive for drugs or alcohol in the tests.

The Service responded to the publication of the coroners report into the death of FF Stephen Hunt in Greater Manchester and the subsequent Regulation 28 letter by establishing a cross Service team to undertake a gap analysis of our procedures and develop an action plan to remedy any deficiencies that were identified. The action plan was signed off in the Service Health, Safety and Welfare Committee once all the actions were completed.

The Service has continued to implement guidance issued by CFOA regarding firefighter fitness, including the new functional fitness test. The fitness adviser has commenced a program of annual fitness tests. The Service has only had to take one firefighter off the run due to failing the test, he was re-instated after a period of remedial training. The Fitness Adviser has supported both the Apprentice and whole time recruit courses with fitness training and advice, she has run boot camps for potential recruits to improve their fitness before undertaking the selection tests.

The Service has continued to respond to new and revised guidance issued as part of the National Operational Guidance program.

## **13. Training**

Training is a key element of the organisation's strategy for maintaining and improving the H&S culture in the Service. It enables managers to identify and meet the H&S responsibilities for their area, while encouraging staff to be aware of their personal responsibilities and for the impact of their actions on others. There has been major investment in operational training, including the Service's interactive incident command training facility to improve and validate the knowledge and skills needed when managing operational incidents – a key area of criticism for some FRSs after major accident investigations.

As well as ensuring all basic and refresher training is provided according to programme, the Operational Training Group (OTG) has developed new training modules to reflect the nature of incidents staff may have to respond to. The Group have reviewed and responded to training advice issued by the Chief Fire Officers Association.

The Service has continued to train managers using the IOSH Managing Safely course. We have offered this training to partner organisations; both Cheshire Police and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service have sent staff on courses. In addition, we have provided the training to companies who have approached us as we are listed as a training provider on the IOSH website. We ran 7 Managing Safely courses.

We have developed new e-learning to support on asbestos awareness and the Service procedures at both operational incidents and when conducting Safe and Well visits.

We have developed a revised e-learning package on Analytical Risk Assessment for operational staff.

We have facilitated the training of new first aiders, using a change in the regulations which allows us to develop a bespoke course.

We have continued to support the Princes Trust Teams using the level 2 British Safety Council training. This training counts towards any vocational training qualifications the students take; we delivered this training to 19 Princes Trust teams, the apprentices and recruit courses.

We have delivered 6 TRIM training sessions to help support staff attending fatal medical incidents.

#### **14. Consultation**

The Service Health Safety and Welfare Committee meets quarterly and is the main mechanism for consulting representative bodies and staff on matters relating to their H&S. The meeting also enables representative bodies to raise any concerns that they have about the health, safety and wellbeing of their members. Although on occasion in the last year the meeting was not quorate due to the absence of members from the representative bodies the meetings took place in their absence.

The minutes from these meetings are published on the Service's Intranet and hard copies displayed on H&S notice boards. The Member champion for H&S has continued to attend meetings of the committee.

#### **15. Health and Wellbeing**

The annual programme of health and wellbeing campaigns is now planned with the Service Campaigns Group to ensure the most efficient use of resources and avoid the possibility of duplicating effort.

Campaigns have been run both internally to address specific issues in the Service and in partnership with external organisations such as Cancer UK; this ensures that the messages provided to staff are consistent with national messages and reinforce wider campaigns.

We have supported Northwest Control with the provision of a series of stress management training courses.

The campaigns this year have continued to include mental health awareness based on the MIND Blue Light programme to which the Service signed up this has resulted in additional training for managers and the recruitment of Mental Health champions on watches to support their colleagues.

Following ongoing commitment to manage workplace stressors, the risk assessment process has been reviewed providing managers with detailed guidance for supporting staff.

## **16. Targets**

The Service's policy on fitness testing for operational staff now means that we have a target to test all staff every year.

Other targets include:

- Conducting a further three internal audits of H&S in the Service
- Continuing health awareness campaigns to improve the health and well being of employees
- Completing the revision of our emergency procedures in the light of the Blue Light collaboration.
- Introducing the functional fitness test proposed by CFOA as part of the process for managing fire fighter fitness.
- Reduce the number of minor vehicle accidents involving Service vehicles.

## **17. Conclusion**

The Service has continued to achieve its aim of a continuous improvement in Health and Safety performance as set out in its Health and Safety policy. This improvement has been achieved due to a combination of the investment of time and money by the Service management, a continuing improvement in the health and safety culture of both managers and staff in the Service and the cooperation of all employees, including the participation of the representative bodies.

The Service has successfully discharged its legal duties for H&S on behalf of the Fire Authority.