



Statement of Assurance

2024/2025



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FOREWORD

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) recognise the importance of having good management, effective processes, and appropriate controls in place to deliver services to the communities of Tyne and Wear. By producing this Statement, we aim to provide information to our communities, government, local authorities and other partners which will allow them to make a valid assessment of our performance between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

As Chair of the Authority and Chief Fire Officer, Chief Executive of the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) and Clerk to the Authority (CFO) we are confident that during 2024/2025, our business was conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money was properly accounted for and used efficiently and effectively. We want to reassure our service users and stakeholders that their fire and rescue service is operating effectively, efficiently, and with a commitment to fair and equitable practices that support our workforce and the communities of Tyne and Wear.

This year marked continued growth as we worked to improve our culture, inclusivity and transparency. Throughout the year, we held culture talks with employees, gathering several ideas and suggestions for improvements. The feedback received laid the foundation for our Strategic Cultural Action Plan, which was shared with employees. In September 2024, we launched our second employee survey and used the results of this survey to identify improvements and review our strategies and values to make meaningful changes.

Highlights this year included celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Service with a series of events. The Service was named the UK Fire and Rescue Service of the Year at the iESE Awards. We were also recognised by the Department for Education as one of the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers and our Learning and Development Manager won the Apprenticeship Champion Award at the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Apprenticeship Awards. These accomplishments reflect the dedication, talent, and hard work of our employees. Another notable moment was the visit from His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh who opened our newest community fire station in Hebburn. This carbon neutral tri-station was awarded 'Collaboration of the Year' at the Government Property Awards. This innovative and ambitious collaboration is enhancing our blue light partnerships, improving the public estate performance and strengthening service delivery.



Councillor Phil Tye
Chair
Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority



Peter Heath, KFSM
Chief Fire Officer, Chief Executive Tyne
and Wear Fire and Rescue Service and
Clerk to the Authority

1. INTRODUCTION

The [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) establishes the Authority and outlines its statutory responsibilities, including providing a fire and rescue service equipped with the necessary resources and training to carry out its core functions. This Act serves as the primary legislation governing the Service, with the Government being responsible for producing the [Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018](#) (National Framework).

The National Framework outlines the Government's priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in England. It describes the high-level expectations but does not prescribe operational matters. The priorities are to:

- Make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and respond to fire and rescue related incidents.
- Identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face.
- Collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide.
- Be accountable to communities for the service they provide.
- Develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

This statement describes how the Authority meets the requirements of the National Framework. It outlines the approach to ensuring governance, financial, and operational arrangements work effectively, including our strategies for prevention, protection, response, and resilience. This statement will be used as a source of information on which the Secretary of State's biennial report is based, under section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Act 2004.

2. BACKGROUND

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority

The Authority is a legal body with statutory duties and responsibilities, including the scrutiny of the Service. The Authority is made up of 17 elected members, 16 of whom are appointed by the five constituent councils of Tyne and Wear in accordance with Schedule 10 of the [Local Government Act 1985](#). The Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria also joined the Authority in 2017.

The Authority are responsible to the residents of Tyne and Wear for the running of the Service. The statutory responsibilities include making provision for extinguishing fires, protecting life and property from fires, rescuing people from road traffic collisions, promoting fire safety and responding to other emergencies. Members of the Authority have a legal duty to monitor the operational performance of the Service and to consider best practice.

The Authority must ensure that the work of the Service is efficient, effective and provides value for money. This is done through the work of committees, as well as the full Authority. Meetings of the full Authority take place monthly between June and March and are supported by a number of smaller committees focussing on performance, people and culture, governance, audit and finance. Sunderland City Council's Democratic Service provides the secretariat function for these meetings, and reports can be viewed on the council's [website](#).

The Authority operates a constitution comprising of standing orders, financial regulations, a scheme of delegation and Codes of Conduct which provides a framework to regulate its business. During 2024/2025, work has been undertaken to review the constitution, and this will be presented to the Authority for approval in July 2025. Further details about the function of the Authority, its members, and their allowances can be found [online](#).

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

The Service operates from 20 locations, 17 of which are fire stations. Our 17 stations are staffed by firefighters who work different shift patterns based on local risk. Fourteen stations are Wholetime stations staffed by full time firefighters around the clock. Two stations operate a Day Crewing shift pattern staffed by full time firefighters from 08:00 to 20:00 hours. There is one on call station staffed by on call firefighters working a retained duty system.

Our key operational equipment includes:

- 25 station-based fire appliances
- 2 primary staffed aerial ladder appliances (ALPs)
- 1 primary staffed special rescue appliance
- 3 rescue boats
- 1 dedicated Command Support Unit plus two forward Command Vehicles based on risk and demand.
- All National Resilience capabilities¹

3. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We comply with the [Equality Act 2010](#) and our responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and our commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I).

What we value

We are dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for those who live, work, and visit Tyne and Wear by ensuring that the public is treated fairly and with respect, while also considering the needs of individuals with different requirements.

We make sure that:

- The services provided by us or on our behalf are accessible and free from discrimination.
- Employees are supported in delivering accessible and non-discriminatory services.

We are dedicated to fulfilling our responsibilities under the PSED when designing and delivering services and in employment practices by promoting:

- The elimination of discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- Advancement of equality of opportunity.
- Building positive relations between individuals sharing a protected characteristic² as identified in the Equality Act 2010 and those who do not.

¹ Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear (CBRN(e)): Hazardous Detection, Identification and Monitoring (HDIM) & Mass decontamination (MD), Command and Control: Enhanced Logistics Support (ELS), Flood capability, High Volume Pump (HVP), Type B boat team & Swift Water Rescue, Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA) specialist response and Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capability.

² Protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex and sexual orientation.

Statement of intent

We are committed to advancing and promoting ED&I within our Service and the wider community. Our commitment to ED&I is an integral aspect of our strategic plans, intended to equip our employees and managers with the knowledge and behaviour necessary to uphold our core values. Our goal is to create a Service that is fair, respectful, and representative of the diverse community we serve.

In line with the PSED, we rigorously evaluate how our policies and decisions affect individuals with protected characteristics, aiming to eliminate or reduce any disadvantages experienced by these individuals. This involves taking proactive measures to address their specific needs, recognising that these needs may differ from those of the general population. We are committed to encouraging the active participation of these individuals in all aspects of our Service activities.

To enhance that we have a thorough understanding of our workforce and the communities in Tyne and Wear, we gather and analyse equality data. This data-driven approach helps us make informed decisions, and identify, and address potential inequalities.

We conduct comprehensive equality and risk impact assessments to make sure that any proposed decisions or procedural changes do not have a negative impact on any stakeholder or the outcome of our service delivery.

In line with our equality objectives, we:

- Provide mandatory ED&I training annually to all our employees.
- Deliver bespoke in-person ED&I training as and when requested, such as Reasonable Adjustment Training to our Learning and Development Team and Vehicle Training School (VTS) driving instructors.
- Facilitate a Culture and Inclusion module within our internal Development Pathways course.
- Complete Equality Impact Assessments to facilitate discussion, refine proposals and assess the impacts of our policies, projects, events and decision-making processes.
- Offer a sign language training programme for firefighters.
- Held a Regional Women's Development Day on 6 March 2025, inviting partners from other fire and rescue services to attend for a day of learning, reflection, and networking.
- Engage with and actively participate in the NFCC ED&I workstreams, as well as contribute towards the development of their ED&I toolkits.
- Improve our understanding of our workforce by collaborating with managers to review and enhance our equality data.
- Provide our workforce with multiple ways of accessing support through avenues such as Safecall, employee network groups, Inclusion Allies and Culture Champions.
- Have developed and relaunched our employee network groups giving them more purpose and involvement in both the Service and our decision-making processes.
- Have achieved and retained a number of accreditations that reflect our inclusive journey including, White Ribbon Accreditation, Endometriosis Friendly Employer and Disability Confident Leader.
- Are a part of select memberships that support us in reflecting on our current practices and making positive changes. These include Stonewall Diversity Champion, Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion Member, Women in the Fire Service Member and the Asian Fire Service Association.

- Maintain a People and Culture Board to provide strategic direction, advice, guidance, and oversight to positive action, projects, priorities, and programmes related to culture and inclusion.
- Have a key awareness calendar of events for the forthcoming year, with a targeted and collaborative approach for each month, which outlines how the Service intends to celebrate and promote these events.
- Publish our annual [Equality Data and Gender Pay Gap Report](#).

By adhering to these principles, we aim to create an inclusive and equitable environment that reflects the diversity of our community and supports the wellbeing and development of all our employees.

4. OUR PEOPLE

Culture

Our [vision, mission, and values](#) shape expectations at every level of the Service. We are committed to building a positive culture through regular employee engagement, monitoring ED&I, and delivering community-centred services to create a fully inclusive and diverse Service.

Our [Code of Conduct and Ethics](#) plays a key role in setting the direction of the Service and influencing its culture. We recognise the need for continuous improvement in our Service culture and in providing further support.

Reports relating to employee matters, key performance indicators (KPIs), targets, and, ED&I are considered by the Authority's [HR Committee](#), and internally by the People and Culture Board. These forums are also responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Service's Code of Conduct and Ethics.

Over the last two years, the Service has continuously worked towards improving our culture, inclusivity, and transparency, which is centred around one of our key themed areas within our TWFRS 2025 Strategy.

In Spring 2024, the Senior Leadership Team and other managers visited all watches and departments to share the findings from the culture review specific to each watch or department. The data presented was anonymous and prompted open and confidential discussions about the culture review findings. Feedback from these meetings was collated into a Strategic Culture Action plan and shared with the workforce.

Between September and October 2024, the Service held its second engagement employee survey. The data gathered was analysed and shared with the workforce. This data was used to create localised action plans for each department or station to action.

Learning and Organisational Development

Our people are our greatest asset, and we are committed to nurturing a diverse, highly skilled, resilient and agile workforce. Our People and Organisational Development Strategy 2021-2025 supports this goal. The Learning and Development department focuses on ensuring that all employees can perform their roles safely, confidently, effectively and efficiently, in accordance with our Service training policy, identified role maps, National Operational Guidance (NOG), and fire and other professional standards. We strive for excellence in both operational and non-operational areas, understanding that learning and development are key to helping employees fulfil their potential and enhance our overall performance.

We promote a learning culture and recognise that individual and organisational learning is essential for achieving our strategic goals and priorities. The development and launch of our Learning Hub in April 2025, after 12 months of development supports this culture and nurtures accountability for personal learning and development. Our approach was recognised by HMICFRS in their 2021/2022 report, which stated, "*The Service has made good improvements with skills and training*". Building on this positive feedback, we continue to adopt the National Operational Standards and the NOG Programme which outline the standards for professional and operational competence.

The Learning and Development department collaborates with internal departments and external partners to identify good practice and ensure our development initiatives have the greatest impact possible. We work inclusively to promote continuous improvement and to ensure that the behaviour and performance of our employees are the best they can be. This is achieved by empowering employees to take responsibility and accountability for their personal development and to acquire, maintain and develop the professional and technical skills required for their roles. Creating the right learning environment and investing in appropriate resources are fundamental to our training and learning success. We accommodate all learning preferences and neurodiversity by adopting a blended learning delivery model that incorporates technology.

All employees participate in regular Performance and Development Reviews (PDRs) with their line managers. These discussions provide meaningful opportunities to review performance and behaviour in line with Service values and the requirements of each employee's role. Key objectives to meet local and Service priorities are agreed and employees with their managers can request development interventions to support their needs. Our employees also participate in a career conversation to discuss their longer-term career aspirations. These help to identify future leaders and structure development activities to support talent management and career progression.

Our Development Pathways offers a structured programme of leadership, management and role-related development interventions for both our operational and non-operational employees. This ensures that individuals identified in their career conversation are developed in the relevant leadership, management and role-related competencies, enabling them to prepare for new roles and carry out their roles effectively. The Development Pathways are based on the NFCC Core Learning Pathway and the NFCC Leadership Framework, utilising the NFCC Leadership Development Programmes at all levels. By adopting these self-directed programmes, and providing tailored support sessions for those enrolled, we foster personal accountability and enhance our learning culture. We collaborate with partners such as Northumbria Police and Nissan to refine and elevate our leadership development programmes.

The Learning and Development department continues to emphasise the importance of gathering feedback across all learning events. New and innovative methods for collecting, recording, evaluating and utilising feedback from events have been established, supporting the ongoing training and learning cycle. A newly introduced feedback process has allowed us to evaluate the impact of development interventions once employees are back in the workplace and assess if they are effectively applying their learning in their roles. We consistently utilise feedback from both internal and external sources to inform our learning culture, assess our performance, and reflect on our effectiveness. Evaluating the quality and impact of training and learning supports the continuity of the training and learning cycle and helps identify improvements, ensuring that our learning and development initiatives align with our strategic goals and priorities.

We continue to utilise apprenticeships across the Service and deliver three apprenticeship standards as an employer-provider: Level 3 Operational Firefighter, Level 3 Emergency Contact Handler and Level 3 Community Safety Advisor. Currently, we have 63 apprentices across the Service and support externally delivered apprenticeships including those for Chartered Managers, Procurement, Accountancy, Heavy Vehicle Technician, Human Resources and Information Communication Technology (ICT). The department supports each apprentice from the first day of their enrolment with guidance and pastoral care, to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours for the role.

Our apprenticeship provision has been recognised as being sector leading, and the Service was ranked 88th in the top 100 employers in the UK in 2024 and won the NFCC Apprenticeship Champion Award in February 2025. Further, our annual self-assessment ensures that we consistently recognise good practice and address improvements for the upcoming year. The provision is inspected against the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and complies with the Apprenticeship Funding Rules as set out by the Department for Education. In addition to delivering apprenticeships, we collaborate with local further education establishments such as Newcastle College and North Tyneside College to support the delivery of their uniformed public and protective service courses.

Health, Safety, and Wellbeing

We understand our responsibilities for the health, safety, and welfare of our employees and others who may be affected by our activities. We are committed to meeting the requirements outlined in the [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#) and associated legislation. Our policy statement of intent and a policy outlining health and safety roles and responsibilities are in place. We develop and review procedures to improve our health, safety, and welfare arrangements in line with legislation and relevant guidance sources.

Our health and safety arrangements are based on the model Plan, Do, Check, Act laid down in the Health and Safety Executive publication HS(G)65 – Successful Health and Safety Management and written and implemented to the International Standard for Health and Safety Management Systems, ISO 45001:2018.

We achieve compliance by conducting thorough risk assessments, putting effective controls in place, training employees, keeping accurate records, and updating our procedures on a regular basis. We have procedures in place to report and investigate accidents and incidents. When necessary, we report incidents to [the Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) in accordance with the [Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations \(RIDDOR\) 2013](#).

We have an ongoing programme of health and safety training, including the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) Managing and Working Safely training courses which are commensurate with an employee's role. Health and safety training procedures enhance employee competence and promote a positive health and safety culture.

We submit quarterly reports to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board and People and Culture Board. Health and safety data is fed into the [quarterly performance reports](#) which are scrutinised by the Policy and Performance Committee.

Our Wellbeing and Trauma Support function, along with the Occupational Health Unit (OHU) offers essential mental health and wellbeing services, and trauma support to operational personnel following traumatic incidents/events. We also provide medicals, health screenings, and advice and guidance on all health-related matters. Additionally, our fitness advisor designs fitness programmes for firefighters and recruits and oversees the gyms at each property location.

5. GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE

Risk and Resource Model

The National Framework requires the Authority to develop an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). Following the NFCC Framework, the Service now designates the IRMP as the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). Our [Community Risk Management Plan 2024-2027](#) is a comprehensive document that outlines the potential fire and rescue related risks that could affect our communities over the next three years. It also outlines how the Service will allocate resources to mitigate those risks and lessen their potential impact. Our CRMP includes 24 actions for completion and throughout 2024/2025 nine CRMP actions were completed. Our CRMP was developed using intelligence, insights and an understanding of both current and future risks in Tyne and Wear, as well as nationally. The information gathered and analysed is detailed in our [Community Risk Profile 2024-2027](#).

Planning and Performance

To meet the requirements of the CRMP, the Service reviews its priorities and targets annually. This ongoing review supports continual improvement and allows us to align our activities with the changing needs of the environment. Our corporate planning has been designed to provide a rigorous yet flexible process that enables the Service to assess and respond to emerging opportunities and threats.

We publish [performance information](#) quarterly. The contents of these reports are reviewed by the Performance and Improvement Board, Executive Leadership Team and the Policy and Performance Committee. The Service is committed to transparency ensuring that performance information is routinely made available on its website for stakeholders to scrutinise. We also produce various end of year reports, including 'Our Year in Review' which reflects on our achievements throughout the year.

The Service submits regular data returns to the Home Office, forming the basis for official national statistics published by the Home Office. Quarterly statistics on trends in fires, casualties, false alarms, and non-fire incidents attended by fire and rescue services are available [online](#) by the Home Office. Our performance is compared with that of other fire and rescue services across England.

Consultation

External and internal consultation are crucial for developing the CRMP and conducting subsequent reviews. We use a variety of methods to engage with community members and for every consultation exercise completed, a summary report is provided to the relevant committee of the Authority. This process ensures that key stakeholders are consulted, involved, and informed of the proposals, allowing their input to be considered in the final plans.

Industrial and Employee Relations Management

We actively participate in political and employee engagement with representative bodies such as The Fire Brigades Union (FBU), GMB, and Unison. We manage this relationship through the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF), which meets monthly to discuss matters related to Service-employee relations and policy development. This forum complements our daily arrangements that support effective industrial/employee relation management.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) assessment examines the Service's effectiveness, efficiency and how well it looks after its people. It is designed to give the public information about how their local fire and rescue

service is performing in several key areas, in a way that is comparable with other services across England.

The Service underwent two full HMICRFS inspections in [2018/2019](#) and [2021/2022](#), and received a 'Good' grade across the three pillars of inspection: Effectiveness, Efficiency, and People.

In December 2023, the Service was one of 10 fire and rescue services invited to participate in a thematic inspection focusing on the handling of misconduct cases in fire and rescue services in England. The findings of the thematic inspection were collated into the [Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services](#) report that was published on 1 August 2024.

In April 2024, the Service underwent a third full inspection [2023/2025](#). The Inspectorate replaced the overall graded judgements at pillar level with graded judgements for 11 diagnostic inspection questions. The Service received two 'Good', eight 'Adequate' and one 'Requires Improvement' grading, and 11 'Areas of Improvement' (AFI) were identified. The Service is progressing key workstreams to address these AFIs, which are closely monitored by the Performance and Improvement Board.

Internal Audit

Sunderland City Council provides our internal audit function and delivers an audit programme of work that oversees key areas of our business. Internal auditing involves examining evidence independently to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the Service's governance, risk management and control processes.

The annual internal audit plan is flexible, allowing internal audit to respond to emerging and changing risks during the year. The audit plan incorporates sufficient work to enable the Head of Internal Audit to give an opinion on the adequacy of the Service's control environment. The 2024/2025 audits were conducted in alignment with the Authority's risk profile, providing independent assurance on our control environment. The Governance Committee approved the [Internal Audit Annual Plan 2024/2025](#) on 26 February 2024.

The findings of the [Internal Audit Annual Report 2024/2025](#) were presented to the Governance Committee on 30 May 2025. The report concluded that *'using the cumulative knowledge and experience of the systems and controls in place, including the results of previous audit work and the work undertaken within 2024/25, it is considered that overall, the Authority continues to have a good internal control environment.'*

Information Governance, Data Transparency and Cyber Security

We are committed to full transparency in accordance with good governance principles and legal requirements. We adhere to the [Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#) by publishing necessary information, including senior officer salaries, property, registers and decisions of significant public interest on our [website](#).

Our Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) oversees information risk across the Service, supported by the Data Protection Officer (DPO) and Information Governance Advisor. We ensure that employees are aware of their data protection responsibilities, particularly regarding safeguarding and the sharing of information.

An information asset register is maintained to oversee all information and personal data held by the Service. Information Asset Owners manage their information assets in accordance with national standards, internal procedures, and data protection legislation, providing annual assurance of compliance. Guidance and training are provided to

employees through a comprehensive suite of information governance procedures and mandatory e-learning. This is supplemented by ongoing awareness campaigns to ensure employees understand their responsibilities in managing information.

Data protection impact assessments are embedded throughout the Service to ensure that any new processes involving the collection of personal data are appropriately considered. Data sharing agreements are established for all partnerships in compliance with our legal responsibilities and are reviewed by the Information Governance team before acceptance.

We maintain a Freedom of Information publication scheme and have complied with 100% of requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, within the required 20 working days over the past year. Additionally, we responded to 100% of subject access requests received within the 30-day legal timeframe.

We strive to meet our responsibilities as outlined in the [UK General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) and related UK legislation concerning the protection of personal data, including the [Data Protection Act 2018](#). Our [privacy notice](#) was updated in September 2024 and explains the reasons for collecting data and how personal information is used. Furthermore, we implement additional security measures to safeguard health and children's data.

Employees complete bi-annual e-learning training that covers data protection and information security, with compliance is monitored quarterly. The Authority receives regular reports to provide assurance that the Service is complying with requests for information and adhering to broader information management legislation.

Cybersecurity continues to pose significant threats to all organisations. To address this threat, our cybersecurity arrangements are aligned with the Government and the National Cyber Security Centre Cyber Assessment Framework. Our ICT systems have appropriate technical controls in place to counter the latest security threats in line with the baseline standard, with an aim to achieve the enhanced standard by 2028. We monitor incidents closely and have processes to effectively manage, mitigate and recover should they occur. To ensure this, we conduct quarterly tabletop exercises with both internal and external teams. Finally, training has been conducted across the Service, especially with the Executive Leadership Team to ensure that all teams are aware of their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding our systems and data.

Our Information Governance and ICT teams collaborated to complete the NHS Data and Security and Protection Toolkit self-assessment for 2024-2025, demonstrating our commitment to good data security practices and the proper handling of personal information. The certification is valid until 30 June 2026.

We provide compulsory e-learning that includes elements of cybersecurity. This training is complemented by regular phishing simulation exercises, ensuring cybersecurity remains a priority in our day-to-day decision-making.

Policies and procedures are in place to protect physical assets within Service premises and while in the public domain. This includes the use of identity cards and access permissions to prevent unauthorised entry into buildings, along with a clear process for immediately reporting the loss of equipment or data.

Complaints about the Service or its employees can be raised directly through our website or several other routes. Our corporate complaints process ensures that any complaints we receive are recorded, investigated, and resolved within 28 working days. We monitor trends to ensure that any emerging issues are addressed appropriately.

We participate in the [National Fraud Initiative](#) as required by the Cabinet Office under statutory authority outlined in Part 6 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

To ensure fair and transparent operations, we maintain counter fraud and whistleblowing arrangements.

6. FINANCIAL ASSURANCE

The overall Service budget is funded from four main sources: council tax, business rates, Government funding and service income. We follow financial procedures for budget setting and monitoring, and the production of our final accounts.

Annual Statement of Accounts

Financial assurance is provided through the publication of the annual statement of accounts, in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and the requirement of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). Our financial statements are subject to annual review by independent auditors as directed by the [Audit Commission Act 1998](#). The Director of Finance, Estates and Facilities is responsible for ensuring the right controls are in place so that financial assets are properly managed, financial reports are accurate, and the annual statement of accounts are prepared in accordance with statutory requirements.

The [Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#) (as amended by [The Accounts and Audit \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)) require the unaudited accounts to be published annually by 30 June 2025 and the audited accounts to be submitted for approval by 28 February 2026.

The unaudited Statement of Accounts 2024/2025 and Inspection Notice were published on our [website](#) on 30 June 2025.

The [audited Statement of Accounts 2023/2024](#) were approved and certified by the Governance Committee on 21 February 2025.

Annual Governance Statement

We have a requirement as set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to publish an Annual Governance Statement. It outlines the systems and processes that ensure the Authority's resources are used in accordance with the law and provide best value for taxpayers. It assures the governance arrangements and the effectiveness of the internal control environment operating within the Authority. This statement is included in our published financial statement of accounts. To help provide assurance that our arrangements are robust and in line with good practice, we undertake an annual review against the CIPFA and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Delivering Good Governance in Local Government, Framework 2016.

The [Annual Governance Statement 2024/2025](#) and [Code of Corporate Governance 2025](#) were noted by the Governance Committee on 21 February 2025 and approved by the Authority on 17 March 2025. Our external auditors assess our Annual Governance Statement. In their latest report, Mazars Forvis commented that they did not identify any matters where the governance statement did not comply with the guidance issued by CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.

External Audit

Forvis Mazars are the appointed external auditor for the Authority and are responsible for the completion of the following assurance activities:

- Audit of the financial statements;
- Providing an opinion on the Authority's accounts; and
- Drawing a value for money conclusion and detailed commentary.

In line with auditing standards, the external auditor prepares an Independent Auditor's Report in which they give their opinion on whether the financial statements provide a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority (the most recent opinion being as of 31 March 2024) and its income and expenditure for the financial year. The opinion is included in the published [2023/2024 Statement of Accounts](#).

The 2023/2024 Audit Completion Report was presented to the Governance Committee on 21 February 2025. The report includes the auditor's work as set out in the Audit Strategy Memorandum, findings, and opinions on the Authority's accounts as well as the value for money conclusion.

[The Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/2026 to 2028/2029](#) provides an analysis of our forecasted financial position over the next four years. It establishes approaches that direct and reinvest limited resources in addressing our strategic priorities, achieving value for money in the use of those resources, and assisting the budget-planning framework for the preparation of the [revenue and capital budgets](#) which are approved annually by the Authority.

The Authority's Reserves Policy provides transparency to stakeholders about the purpose and level of earmarked reserves. The [Reserves Policy 2024/2025 to 2027/2028](#) was presented to the Authority at their meeting on 24 June 2024.

In line with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, we produce an annual Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Plan. This plan supports the provision of services and functions through the management of the Authority's cash flow, and levels of affordable debt and ensures the Capital Programme is sustainable and deliverable, considering the wider resources available to the Authority.

Procurement

Our Procurement Policy outlines our strategic approach to achieving value for money through the effective procurement of goods and services. Procurement arrangements are integrated within the Service and supported through procedural guidance. Procurement and financial regulations are in place to safeguard against unethical behaviour. We adhere to a comprehensive procurement process to uphold ethical standards.

The Procurement team has obtained the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) Corporate Ethical Procurement and Supply Status, demonstrating the Service's commitment to ethical sourcing and supplier management. We are listed on the CIPS corporate ethics register and utilise the corporate ethics mark to signal to suppliers, customers, potential employees and other stakeholders that we uphold ethical values in our sourcing and supplier management practices.

Employees handling competitive tendering are either fully CIPS qualified or working towards this qualification. Each year, they undergo an Ethical Procurement and Supply test to maintain CIPS registration/qualification. Fully qualified members of the team must

complete a minimum of 30 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training and are awarded Member of the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (MCIPS) Chartered Status. Due to the high level of qualifications, competence, and achievements, the Service has been registered as achieving CIPS Status.

To ensure fair, open, and transparent processes, any procurement requirement exceeding £10,000 over the contract term, is handled by the Procurement Team in line with the standing orders. Delegation reports are created for contracts exceeding £20,000 and must be approved by the CFO before award.

The Procurement Services Manager and the team provide advice and clear guidance on the procuring of goods and services. There is a robust system of scrutiny, including competitive and formal procurement with advertising of opportunities in line with the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR). Delegations and reports on contract spending above £500,000 are prepared for approval by the Authority.

Modern Slavery Statement

Our [Modern Slavery Statement 2024/2025](#) sets out compliance with the requirements of Section 54 of the [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#). The statement details the steps taken by the Authority during the financial year to safeguard against the presence of modern slavery and human trafficking within business activities and the supply chain. The Statement was presented to the Governance Committee in September 2025 and to the Fire Authority in October 2025.

7. OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

The National Framework outlines the requirement placed upon FRAs to provide assurance on operational matters which are determined locally by them in partnership with their local communities, citizens, businesses, and others. This section of the statement aims to assure that our services are delivered in line with our statutory responsibilities and with due regard to the expectations set out in our CRMP including cross-border, multi-authority, and national incident arrangements.

Key legislative documents defining these responsibilities are:

- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#).
- [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#).
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#).
- [Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#).
- [Localism Act 2011](#).
- [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#).
- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018](#).
- [Fire Safety Act 2021](#).
- [Building Safety Act 2022](#)
- [Fire Safety \(England\) Regulations 2022](#).

PREVENTION

Our Prevention and Education department is divided into two main segments: prevention and strategy work, and safety and education programmes. The work of the department is supported by a diverse range of employees and volunteers, who work within the NFCC guidance and alongside partner agencies to identify those most at risk from fire. We also play a significant role in promoting overall health and wellbeing, as well as reducing crime.

Prevention and Strategy

We use local and national data to make informed decisions about how and where we deliver our prevention activities. Our Safe and Well Targeting Strategy uses data from sources such as Exeter³ data from health partners, public referrals, and internal data to find those most at risk from fires. By taking part in local Health and Wellbeing Boards, we have improved the targeting of our prevention work. Additionally, we have a Vulnerable Persons Procedure in place to identify those most vulnerable to fire risk.

In 2024/2025, we conducted 26,493 Safe and Well visits targeting individuals most vulnerable to fire. These home visits are conducted by the Prevention and Education department or operational personnel. During the visits, residents are educated about fire safety in the home, security, as well as the prevention of slips, trips, and falls. We also supply safety devices such as smoke detectors, kitchen heat alarms, fire-retardant bedding, and mats.

Our Prevention and Education department and operational personnel are trained to identify broader issues, and when necessary, residents are referred to partner agencies such as Adult Social Care or other support networks. Last year, we made 871 referrals to other agencies. Our Safe and Well visits are assured of quality to maintain the highest standards of service. Additionally, households can complete an online Home Fire Safety Check using the Safelincs system. During 2024/2025 this service was used over 6,500 times.

In Sunderland and North Tyneside, the Service is funded to conduct falls assessments and provide fall prevention equipment to those in need. This has resulted in over 3,239 falls assessments being conducted and the distribution of over 1205 pieces of equipment. We also collaborate with public health teams from North Tyneside Council to offer free health checks during our Safe and Well visits. As part of this scheme, our employees conduct blood pressure and atrial fibrillation tests, targeting residents who do not regularly visit their GP for routine health checks. These tests can help identify early signs of health issues, where early detection can be lifesaving.

We collaborate with partners to reinforce referral pathways, provide training, and share risk information aimed at identifying vulnerable residents to prevent fire-related injuries or fatalities. To support this work, we have developed a seven-minute briefing and a 'When to Refer' wallet-sized information card.

Safety and Education

We deliver a wide range of education and engagement programmes that aim to improve the lives and opportunities of young people and our communities. As an active member of [StayWise](#), we contribute to an online repository providing educational resources for teachers and community safety practitioners to use when delivering safety messages.

Through the combined efforts of our employees and volunteers and the use of online platforms, we promote home safety, water safety and road safety messages which can be tailored for all key stages of education. The Service runs and supports a wide range of local and national campaigns to raise awareness of risks and reduce preventable deaths. We also engage in various community activities focused on seasonal risks such as Bonfire Night, National Motorcycle Safety Week, Global Road Safety Week, NFCC Be Water Aware, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution Respect the Water and the Royal Life Saving Society UK Drowning Prevention Week.

³ Open Exeter gives access to patient data held on the National Health Application and Infrastructure Services (NHAIS) platform. The NHAIS platform (sometimes known as the Exeter system).

We have developed a road safety initiative, Drive to Arrive -Young Drivers Roadshow, to engage students and educate them about the dangers of the 'fatal four'⁴. This initiative provides practical tips for safer driving and ways to avoid common dangers. We have hosted seven events in colleges and universities with 571 participants in attendance. In September 2023, we launched the Pre-Driver Programme, a classroom-based initiative for 15 to 17 year olds. In 2024/2025 48 sessions were undertaken with 846 students in attendance.

We have developed The Drive to Arrive Clearway an intervention programme focusing on individuals who have committed serious driving offences. This programme encourages pro-social attitudes and goals for the future, aiming to help individuals develop new skills to reduce or stop their offending while increasing their knowledge of driving laws. This programme is delivered in conjunction with the Prison and Probation Service.

We have delivered seven 'BikerDown' motorcycle safety training sessions reaching 202 bikers. Our tutors provided practical skills and advice on avoiding crashes, as well as on providing lifesaving first aid to those involved in a motorcycle accident.

We also administer the Community Responder Training Programme to train individuals in using a throw bag, a crucial piece of lifesaving equipment for water emergencies. We have collaborated with Newcastle City Council to install several throw bag boards which are accessible by dialing 999. Since July 2018, we have conducted training at 22 venues with 64 employees in the use of throw bags. Each venue receives annual refresher training. We have been informed of 12 people being rescued by individuals who had received this training; the last rescue took place in July 2024. The boards have also been accessed by the public and partners on three occasions to support water rescues with the last being in July 2024. We worked with Newcastle City Council to support the installation of a further 24 throw boards across the city's bodies of water, bringing the total number of throwline boards to 43, with a further 9 to be installed in 2025.

Our interactive safety centre, [SafetyWorks!](#) provides realistic, interactive educational experiences for schoolchildren and vulnerable adults, to gain knowledge about a wide range of safety focused learning activities to make communities safer. By delivering these activities, we can help make people safer, in their homes and within their communities. We collaborate with partners such as Nexus, local authority road safety teams, the Royal National Lifeboats Institution, Northern PowerGrid, Northern Gas Networks, and Northumbria Police. In 2024/2025 Safetyworks! welcomed 11,349 visitors.

One of our core objectives is to reduce the number of deliberate fires through targeted interventions. To support this, we raise awareness through our Safer Summers and Darker Nights campaigns and work with partner agencies, including Northumbria Police and local authorities, to identify issues and promote our anonymous reporting service Firestoppers. Our ReportIT tool allows us to report fly-tipping and refuse build-up directly to local authorities to ensure prompt collection and reduce the risk of ignition.

We offer a range of early intervention programmes to address individuals involved or at risk of a fire starting or fire-related Antisocial Behaviour (ASB). Our Diversionary Activity teams deliver a range of programmes.

⁴ The 'fatal four' are offences prioritised by the police in the National Police Chiefs' Council road policing strategy, to reduce the numbers of people killed and seriously injured on the roads. The fatal four offences are 1. Speeding, 2. Drink and drug driving, 3. Driving while distracted and 4. Non-wearing of seat belts.

We provide the King's Trust 12-week programme for young people aged 16 to 25 who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET). The programme equips participants with skills and experience to enhance their employability and improve their quality of life. The teams deliver this programme in three areas across Tyne and Wear: Sunderland, Washington, and South Shields. We delivered the TEAM Programme of employability and interpersonal skills to 57 young people who are NEET.

The [Phoenix Programme](#) offers a personal development course for young people aged 10 to 16 who may have been involved or are at risk of being involved in ASB or crime. The programme uses firefighter-training activities and search and rescue scenarios to help participants develop resilience, teamwork, and enhance their communication skills. It aims to promote positive attitudes and behaviours. The programme provides alternative education provision directly to schools, offering support to young people who are involved in ASB and may face exclusion from mainstream education. The Phoenix team has collaborated with 41 community partners, including local authorities, community groups, mainstream primary and secondary schools as well as pupil referral units, to deliver 33 programmes to 298 children and young people.

In September 2023, in partnership with Northumberland Fire and Rescue Services we applied for Home Office Safer Streets 5 funding. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria supported the application, and our bid was successful. This allowed us to expand the Phoenix Programmes work and provide customised education packages to young people involved in, or on the fringes of committing ASB. This has been delivered throughout 2024/2025 and has provided 24 programmes attended by 220 young people.

We operate four [Fire Cadet](#) branches that provide training and development for young people aged 11 to 17. These branches are in South Tyneside, North Tyneside, Newcastle, and Sunderland, and follow the NFCC National Fire Cadets model, with cadets working towards the completion of the Cadet Award. In total the Service has 80 active cadets and plans to create a fifth Fire Cadet branch in the Gateshead which would increase the capacity to 100 cadets across the county. In addition, to fire service activities, the cadets visit other organisations, such as the Northumbria Police's Marine Unit, the airport fire service, and the Highways Agency.

Safeguarding

We adhere to and apply the NFCC's Safeguarding Guidance for Children, Young People, and Adults in our policies, procedures, and training. Safeguarding training is part of the Service's induction process and is included in the Development Pathways course. Advanced safeguarding training is provided to employees who interact directly with the community or have specific safeguarding responsibilities. This includes operational personnel, Flexi Duty Officers (FDOs), Fire Safety Officers/Auditors, Prevention and Education employees, and Control Room Operatives. Safeguarding training is completed every three years or annually for employees involved in diversionary activities. Within this training cycle, 270 employees have completed the training. In 2024/2025 we submitted safeguarding referrals for 512 adults and 27 children.

We also adhere to the [PREVENT Strategy](#), which is part of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy [CONTEST](#). This strategy aims to prevent individuals from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. We have a Prevent Policy that aligns with our safeguarding procedures, and we work during our engagement activities to fulfil our prevention role and support partners in local efforts to prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism.

We collaborate with various partners, including the police, health, social care and voluntary services, to identify and support vulnerable members of the community. We work with Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards in the five local authority areas, as well as the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to determine the most appropriate action to take.

PROTECTION

Our Fire Safety department aims to enhance the safety and wellbeing of the communities of Tyne and Wear by minimising risks and incidents. This is achieved through engagement with businesses and offering guidance to ensure compliance with fire safety regulations, as well as petroleum and explosives legislation. We also strive to ensure that buildings are constructed, maintained, and protected from the risk of fire and other emergencies.

We use data and business intelligence to identify buildings that are most at risk from fire, including hospitals, care homes, high-rise buildings, and buildings licensed for storage of explosives or petroleum. By working with local authority departments such as Building Control, Licensing, and Environmental Health, we can maximise our interventions and improve our data.

For the department to fulfil its role effectively, it is essential to have the necessary resources and highly trained, competent personnel. Fire safety personnel are warranted to carry out their duties and adhere to the qualification standards outlined in the NFCC Competency Framework. Additionally, all operational personnel are trained in fire safety awareness and our Senior Officers/FDOs are warranted and trained in fire safety engagement.

In 2024/2025, the fire safety department undertook the following:

- 1,460 Fire Safety Audits
- 559 Building Regulation Consultations
- 152 Building Regulation related queries
- 456 Licensing Consultations
- 95 Arson reduction activities
- 311 Cause for Concerns
- 170 Post Fire Activities
- 222 Referrals from OHC/OHCV
- 85 Explosive inspections/queries/issues/revocation
- 85 Follow up notices
- 65 Petroleum inspections/queries/issues/revocation
- 357 Desk based queries
- 52 Prohibition Notices served
- 14 Enforcement Notices served
- 429 Informal Notification of Deficiencies sent

Risk Based Inspection Programme

We continue to utilise a Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) for non-domestic premises. This process helps to identify and target premises with known specific risks or are likely to have potential fire compliance issues. All premises, including multi-occupied residential buildings, are inspected based on our assessment of risk. Approximately 32% of the department's workload is focused on the RBIP, and this work is supported by operational personnel who also conduct compliance visits. The remaining workload is considered reactive and consists of referrals from operational personnel, partner agencies and the public as well as building regulations, consultations and queries. We have

appointed a High-Risk Building Manager who is overseeing all high-risk buildings in the area who is working with the North East Combined Authority Remediation Acceleration Plan for high rise buildings in the Service area.

Fire Safety Audits

We conduct Fire Safety Audits, and the details are recorded on our internal information management system. The outcome of any non-compliant audit is communicated to the Responsible Person by letter or email. This communication outlines any necessary actions to improve the overall fire safety provision at the premises. Internally, we have a quality assurance process in place to ensure consistency in our approach to fire safety and the application of outcomes. Fire Safety Audits are supported by a feedback process that seeks input directly from the audited premises. This information is used to inform and develop future auditing processes.

Enforcement and Engagement

Support business and commerce to comply with fire safety regulations remains a priority. At times, we must enforce the law by implementing a formal enforcement procedure and, if necessary, prosecute. We have robust, legally compliant processes in place to ensure public safety is maintained. Our [Enforcement and Engagement Policy](#) sets out the action, that may be taken to ensure compliance is achieved. This policy ensures that Inspectors act in an equitable, practical, and consistent manner.

To ensure compliance with the [Enforcement and Safety Information Act 1988](#), we publish and update the NFCC Enforcement Register with all enforcement actions taken on premises. [Enforcement Notices](#) and Prohibition Notices are published on the Register for a minimum of three years.

Primary Authority Scheme

The Government's [Primary Authority Scheme](#) (PAS) is a means for businesses to receive tailored advice and guidance through a single point of contact. We currently have 28 PAS partners through this scheme. These partnerships are predominantly with businesses in retail, housing, hospitality, and leisure sectors and are managed by two dedicated officers.

Unwanted Fire Signals

Unwanted Fire Signals place a demand on our resources, operational personnel and the Fire Safety department. We have implemented processes with our Fire Control to challenge responses to automatic fire alarms. We manage an Unwanted Fire Signals Group, which focuses on the effective management of fire detection and warning systems. Our team works with Responsible Persons at the premises, with emphasis on the effective management of fire detection and warning systems to reduce unwanted fire signal activations.

Fire Investigation

Fire Investigation is an integral part of our prevention and protection activities. A dedicated Fire Investigation Manager oversees the work of our Fire Investigation Officers. All Fire Investigation Officers are provided with specialist training in-line with the NFCC Fire Investigation Competency Framework, and their outputs are peer reviewed. Our Watch Managers and Crew Managers are trained at Level 2 in Fire Investigation, and all operational personnel are given fire investigation awareness appropriate to their role.

The purpose of Fire Investigation is to determine the origin, cause and development of a fire. All fires attended are investigated to establish the cause. Investigation outcomes set future Prevention and Protection activities and assist in the prevention and detection of crime. Fire Investigators collaborate closely with Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service

and Northumbria Police to achieve these goals. There is a Fire Investigation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the other three FRSs in the North East Region. This ensures that fire investigation resources from other Services can be used when necessary to deliver prompt investigations. Where necessary, Fire Investigation details are shared with the Police, HM Coroner, Insurers, Trading Standards, Stakeholders and other Fire and Rescue Services to help identify dangerous products and practices. In 2024/2025, the TWFRS undertook 98 formal Tier 2 Fire Investigations, which supported criminal investigations conducted by Northumbria Police.

Arson Reduction

Our Arson Liaison Officer collaborates with our Service Delivery Station Managers and local partners to reduce the risk of arson and improve the safety of derelict buildings. This includes offering advice and guidance to the owners of vacant or derelict buildings. We identify vulnerable buildings through the proactive work of operational personnel, information from Northumbria Police and from fires in vacant buildings. Our advice covers the building owners' responsibilities under Fire Safety Regulations, methods for improving the security of buildings and grounds, and removing combustible waste to reduce the risk of arson. We also alert the owners of buildings in disrepair when there is an increased risk of fire setting in the area and assist partners in legal action against building owners when necessary. This assistance involves providing operational data such as the number of incidents and the financial data with associated costs of the operational response. During 2024/2025, TWFRS issued 74 arson reduction letters to Responsible Persons.

Building Safety Regulator

Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the Government and the public sought reassurances about the safety of high-rise residential buildings. This led to significant initiatives for the Service, including the creation of the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) Team in October 2023. This Team is dedicated to implementing the new Higher-Risk Residential Buildings (HRRBs) inspection regime, post-Grenfell. The team comprises of a Regional Manager, three Inspecting Officers and a Fire Engineer (currently vacant) to apply the new legislation and guidance, together with the HSE, for all HRRBs that meet the criteria, and is fully funded by the Home Office.

Our BSR team provides fire safety and fire engineering advice to support the Building Safety Regulator. This Regulator is led by the HSE and supported by FRAs, Building Control, other regulatory bodies and the NFCC. The Regulator operates on a regional basis, and our Team works across the North East region covering Tyne and Wear, Cleveland, Durham and Darlington and Northumberland. The Team is also resourcing BSR projects based in the London Region, as this geographical area hosts the majority of buildings which fall under the scope of the Building Safety Act 2022.

The BSR team is involved in all stages of high-risk building safety compliance. This includes Gateway 2 applications, which focuses on Building Control applications, where the Building Safety Regulator as the Building Control Body can utilise the Fire Service BSR teams' resources to advise the Registered Building Inspector. Gateway 3 applications will be undertaken when a building is complete and ready for occupation and may involve on-site inspection of facilities and fire safety measures used for firefighting operations, to ensure they are functioning and fit for purpose.

A considerable proportion of the workstream of the BSR team is the appraisal of 'In Occupation' higher risk buildings. This involves Inspecting Officers reviewing Building Safety Case Reports submitted by Principle Accountable Persons, for buildings which fall under the scope of the Building Safety Act, as part of the application process for a Building Assessment Certificate.

The BSR Team works closely with other regional FRS teams, the National Building Safety Coordinator and the NFCC. Effective working relationships have been formed with the HSE BSR team and Principal Regulatory Leads operating in both the North East region and London to strive for a consistent approach to regulation regionally and nationally.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The nature and scope of emergency incidents we respond to have changed in recent years, along with the risk profiles and the needs of the communities we serve. Operational personnel respond to a wide and diverse range of emergency incidents including:

- Extinguishing fires and protecting life and property when a fire occurs.
- Rescuing trapped casualties from road traffic collisions (RTCs) using specialist-cutting equipment. Our operational personnel hold an Immediate Emergency Care (IEC) qualification and/or First Response Emergency Care Level 3 course (FREC3) allowing them to provide a greater level of care to casualties.
- Conducting water rescues from the Tyne and Wear Rivers and other inland waterways, led by the Swift Water Rescue Team and supported by the fireboat moored on the River Tyne. We also conduct rescues on ice, mud, and other unstable ground.
- Preparation for incidents involving chemicals, biological agents, and gases. We can decontaminate operational personnel and the public in the event of an incident.
- Conducting the specialist rescue of people or animals from inaccessible places like cliffs, bridges cranes, and confined spaces using rope rescue techniques.
- Responding to incidents with railways, aircrafts, and other involving fire or rescue.
- Hosting National Resilience assets, which means we are resilient within our area and assist other fire and rescue services across the country who may need assistance with specialist equipment or operational personnel.

This is not exhaustive; however, it identifies the key challenges that we face and the need to be prepared for as a modern fire and rescue service.

During 2024/2025, our crews responded to 17,401 incidents. These included:

- 6,935 fires
- 544 fires in domestic premises
- 208 fires in commercial premises
- 282 road traffic collisions
- 3,334 special service calls
- 198 incidents of flooding
- 4,960 automatic fire alarms

The role of firefighter is varied, and our operational personnel are involved in a host of prevention and protection activities, regularly visiting domestic homes, schools, community venues and commercial premises to understand, manage risks and share learning. To ensure an effective and safe response to incidents, operational personnel collect risk information for specific premises. The information captured is uploaded and accessible via Mobile Data Terminals which help ensure the safety of individuals and the effective management of an incident. We produce detailed guidance and have robust arrangements in place to ensure that the risk information we hold is relevant, accurate, and up to date.

We develop pre-determined attendance requirements based on risk information from sources such as incident data and site-specific risk information. Additionally, we review our performance to ensure we meet our statutory duties, which includes how quickly we respond to incidents. Our performance is internally scrutinised by the Performance and Improvement Board and by the Authority's Policy and Performance Committee. As a result of our proactive work, we continue to be one of the fastest responding fire and rescue services in the country.

Incident command is an integral part of our assessment procedures, with commanders regularly assessed through live and simulated exercises. As a Category 1 responder under the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#), we have a duty to act as part of the multi-agency response to civil emergencies. All commanders are trained in the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\)](#), for an effective multi-agency response to incidents.

In line with the operational response CRMP actions to mitigate risk within our region, the Service introduced a Day Crewing Shift System at Wallsend Community Fire Station and reinvested the resources efficiently and effectively across the Service area. This enabled the following actions to be implemented:

- In June 2024 we increased our water rescue capability and resilience by having a fire boat and water rescue available at all times.
- In January 2025 we increased our availability and resilience to respond to line rescue incidents, building collapses and large vehicle crashes.

After years in planning our carbon neutral tri-station at Hebburn was completed and fully operational in May 2024, with the official opening taking place with His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh in September 2024. The station was awarded 'Collaboration of the Year' in September 2024 at the Government Property Awards in Westminster, London. Judged by a panel of industry experts, the award recognised the Service for its innovation and ambition in collaboration whilst delivering real benefits through partnerships, improving the performance of the public estate and enhancing public service delivery.

Fire Control

Our Fire Control manages emergency call handling and resource mobilisation. They provide end-to-end call and support management for incidents, allocating resources to respond to emergencies and adjusting resource allocation as necessary. This dynamic 'mobilising' allows our Fire Control to increase or decrease resources to ensure incidents are attended promptly, with the right people, skills, and equipment to deal with the incident as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The Service is in the process of replacing the Fire Control Room's Mobilising System and updating the telephone lines to a digital platform. The Control Room has been temporarily relocated to facilitate the ongoing refurbishment project to the main Control Room. During this period, Control staff are undergoing comprehensive training on the new mobilising system to ensure they are fully prepared for the go live scheduled for November 2025. This proactive approach is aimed at ensuring a smooth transition and continued operational excellence once the refurbished main Control Room is live.

Operational training

We ensure that operational personnel receive comprehensive training to perform their duties safely and effectively in compliance with Section 7 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Our instructors hold nationally recognised teaching and assessing qualifications.

Training covers core risk-critical skills that they must undertake ensuring acquisition, maintenance, and assurance. The Operational Training department ensures all training delivered is NOG compliant and adheres to relevant fire standards and legislation.

Skills such as breathing apparatus and incident command are independently assessed at agreed intervals for key disciplines. Breathing apparatus refresher training takes place in dedicated “hot fire” conditions, with all eligible personnel required to attend. All personnel with a command role, from acting Crew Manager to the CFO, are required to complete incident command validations biennially.

Our firefighters undertake trauma training in IEC/FREC3 delivered by a seconded Paramedic from the North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust which provides vital life-saving skills for treating trauma casualties and improves outcomes for incident casualties. This arrangement also provides the Service with Clinical Governance to carry out life saving techniques at the most serious of incidents that we attend. This training, like all others, adapts depending on the latest information from National Operational Learning (NOL), Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) and outcomes of inquiries.

In April 2024, all operational personnel undertook Ten Second Triage (TST) training following the recommendations from the Manchester Arena Inquiry. It focused on closing critical gaps in trauma knowledge and training among responders, whilst enabling responders to prioritise the most critically injured individuals during a crisis. This practice will continue to be embedded through future training, testing and exercising, as well as incorporating it into the IEC/FREC3 syllabus.

Our Brigade Training Centre is a recognised centre for Skills for Justice training and is accredited to deliver Level 3 courses in various areas such as:

- Breathing Apparatus Instructor.
- Road Traffic Collision Instructor.
- Tactical Ventilation Instructor.
- Compartment Fire Behaviour Instructor, and
- Up to Level 4 Incident Command qualifications.

In relation to emergencies other than fires and RTCs, our CRMP identifies emergency special services to include flooding and water rescue incidents, wildfires, animal rescue, rope rescue, hazardous materials/spills and assisting other agencies. Our training undergoes strict internal and external quality assurance to ensure the quality of training and assessment.

We arrange annual training days for operational personnel to cover areas identified by NOL, JOL, and operational assurance. This allows us to tailor our training to consider good practice, new guidance, equipment, and techniques.

Our VTS provides in-house Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) training to firefighters, followed by an Emergency Fire Appliance Driving (EFAD) course, enabling students to drive safely whilst operating blue lights and sirens on the way to an incident. The VTS provides training for firefighters to drive special appliances, such as the ALP, Special Rescue Tender, Incident Command Unit, hook lift appliances, Moffett Mounty forklift trucks, Targeted Response/Forward Command Vehicles and the Enhanced Logistical Support Vehicle. FDOs receive officer response driving commensurate with their role. We ensure that all driving qualifications are refreshed within the required timeframes as per legislation.

We engage external training providers to ensure our Swift Water Rescue team are trained to the required standards of the Rescue Boat Code, guaranteeing proficient water rescue provision. Our working from height instructors undergo annual assurance by an external body to ensure compliance with current guidelines. Additionally, we collaborate with external training providers to train our animal rescue leads, keeping them updated with the latest information, which is then cascaded down to the crews.

Trainee firefighters undergo foundation training at the Brigade Training Centre and participate in a Level 3 Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship. Apprentice firefighters undergo an end-point assessment, and our pass and distinction rates exceed the national average.

The quality assurance of training ensures that operational personnel are trained and competent to meet various demands placed on them, considering local threats and risks.

Firefighter fitness

We employ a full-time Health and Fitness Advisor to support our operational employees to attain and maintain the fitness standards required, and to undertake fitness testing. Fitness testing takes place on a six-monthly schedule and is supported by a procedure, which adheres to the NFCC Fire Fit guidance. To ensure operational employees are fit and supported to remain in employment. They receive:

- Access to gym facilities at all stations and time to undertake physical training daily when at work.
- Mandated operational duties fitness testing assured and conducted by the Health and Fitness Advisor.
- Health monitoring by the OHU and associated physical fitness support with bespoke programming available.
- Health surveillance assessments are undertaken every three years and access to a vaccination programme.
- Access and support to individualised fitness and health programming for personnel that have returned from periods of sickness absence. Continued and tailored support on health and fitness areas such as weight management, injury prevention, injury recovery and occupational related fitness for both green and grey book employees.
- Progressive, planned, and structured programming and lesson delivery aligned to all Service Trainee Firefighter Courses.
- Input and delivery of each service recruitment campaign fitness testing (Chester Treadmill Walk T, 20m Bleep Test, Drill Yard Role Related Assessments), including positive action event fitness advice.

National Fire Standards

The Fire Standards Board (FSB) was created to oversee the identification, organisation, development and maintenance of fire standards for FRSs in England. The FSB commissions the NFCC Fire Standards Team to coordinate and facilitate the standards on their behalf, to benefit the profession, services and communities served by them. Nineteen [Fire Standards](#) have now been published by the FSB and cover a range of organisational and operational areas for FRSs to consider including safeguarding arrangements and fire investigation. The Service has an ongoing programme of work in place to ensure that its arrangements align with these standards, with any identified gaps considered and addressed, where appropriate. As part of their approach to inspecting the Inspectorate will provide due consideration for the fire standards.

National Operational Guidance

We adhere to the NOG framework in our operations to ensure our practices align with the highest standards of safety, efficiency, and effectiveness. By adhering to NOG, we aim to provide consistent, effective responses to emergencies, while prioritising the safety of our personnel and the communities we serve. Our commitment to NOG includes:

- Training and Development - Ensuring all personnel are trained according to NOG training specifications, incorporating the latest operational techniques and safety practices.
- Operational Procedures - Regularly reviewing and updating operational procedures to reflect NOG guidance, ensuring they are embedded in our daily practices.
- Risk Management - Implementing risk management strategies aligned with NOG principles to minimise risks to our personnel and the public.
- Continuous Improvement - Engaging in ongoing assessment and refinement of our practices based on NOG updates, incident debriefs, and lessons learned from both NOL and JOL.

We conduct a NOG Strategic Gap Analysis (SGA). This is considered national best practice when implementing and embedding NOG into a UK FRS. It enables the Service to perform a root and branch review of all operational policies and procedures, driving continuous improvement by highlighting and actioning areas of compliance, partial compliance and non-compliance of NOG. To maintain transparency, the NOG implementation team report SGA data to the NFCC, this ensures its availability upon request by HMICFRS.

All SGA data is presented at a strategic level quarterly to the Internal Governance Board. Informing members of the board the Services' current position for partial and non-compliant actions. The data within the report enables the board to make decisions on each action. With this level of strategic oversight, corrective actions are promptly taken to ensure continuous improvement.

We represent the North East region in the NFCC NOG Forum. Presenting the region's quarterly progress report. We also host and deliver the Regional Guidance Forum. This collaboration supports preparedness, shared organisational learning and NOG alignment.

Operational Support and Assurance

Our Operational Support and Assurance team ensures that activities in the operational environment and the necessary safety measures are evaluated, monitored, and reviewed. Officers regularly attend incidents and training exercises to observe operational performance and assure compliance with NOG and our incident management policy and procedure. Any observations noted as good practice or areas for development are captured by the Operational Support and Assurance team and learning is shared locally, regionally, and nationally. The Operational Assurance Working Group (OAG) coordinates this work and identified trends are progressed for training consideration.

National Operational Learning/Joint Organisational Learning

NOL and JOL are electronic data-sharing platforms for emergency services and partners to collaborate to promote joint learning and improvements in the way in which we work between FRS's (NOL) and Multi-Agency Partners (JOL) together. Through the NOL and JOL websites, we learn, share, and act upon lessons identified, notable practice, and information notes linked to NOG and JESIP. We are committed to improving and regularly share our operational learning to improve the levels of safety for all emergency responders and our partner organisations.

RESILIENCE

Partnership Working and Collaborative Arrangements

We collaborate with a range of organisations to provide the best service for our communities and maintain a partnership register that details of our partnership agreements. The register is regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with current laws, regulations, and recognised good practice. Our partnerships with other service providers and organisations bring offer numerous benefits, including improved training, shared learning, operational efficiencies and support for emergency response.

Colocation

We promote co-location with our blue light sector colleagues at several of our sites to enhance community outcomes and maximise spatial occupancy across our estate. Our Service operates from 20 sites, with Northumbria Police and the North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust sharing seven of these locations. We host selected public sector and charitable organisations at our sites, including the North of Tyne Mountain Rescue, Northumberland Bloodbikes, the Great North Air Ambulance Service, HM Prison and Probation Service, the Salvation Army and Sunderland City Council (City Alarm and Emergency Centre).

Northumbria Local Resilience Forum

We are a representative member of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF), a statutory multi-agency partnership that ensures local authorities, emergency services, the Environment Agency and utility companies fulfil their duties under the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#). This forum facilitates preparation for emergency response and recovery arrangements for any local or regional major incidents, disasters, or emergencies, that may affect the communities of Tyne and Wear and parts of Northumberland.

In collaboration with LRF partners, we support the assessment of risk to inform and maintain emergency plans and business continuity arrangements. We contribute by sharing information that informs the Community Risk Register and aids in the preparation of multi-agency plans and documents.

A Service representative chairs the LRF Risk Group, leading local and regional risk-based decision making. The chair of this group represents the Service at the LRF Assurance Group and contributes to the LRF Strategic Board, which is chaired by our CFO

We work with national partners to support the Government's counter-terrorism strategy [CONTEST](#). Several employees are trained as National Inter-Agency Liaison Officers (NILOs) and collaborate with the police, ambulance service, military, and other government agencies to share intelligence and assist in resolving operational incidents.

Mutual Aid Arrangements

Our Service maintains mutual aid agreements with two bordering FRAs, Northumberland and County Durham and Darlington, as required under sections 13 and 16 of The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Additionally, we have MOUs and Service Level Agreements with Northumbria Police and the North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust.

We maintain a partnership register that enables us to arrange mutual aid and MOUs with a variety of other Category 1 and 2 responders and voluntary organisations. We have reviewed and updated several of these agreements over the past year to reflect changes in local risks, partner agency priorities, and new national guidance.

For example, our Search and Rescue MOU with Northumbria Police includes provisions for the use of the Un-crewed Air Support Unit (UAS or drone) and canine search capability, as well as our National Resilience arrangements for our HDIM capability and our role as a National Resilience Training Delivery Partner. We reviewed our Major Incident Declaration Protocol in collaboration with blue light partners and other responder agencies.

National Resilience

National Resilience refers to the capacity and capability of FRAs to collaborate with other Category 1 and 2 responders to maintain a sustained, effective response to major incidents, emergencies, and disruptive challenges, such as (but not limited to) those identified in the National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies. These risks require strategic, national-level planning due to their scale and complexity, which may exceed local resources even with mutual aid arrangements in place.

We host all National Resilience capabilities including Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capabilities including a canine search team, Hazardous Materials Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM), a Mass Decontamination Unit (MDU), Enhanced Logistics Support (ELS) and a Flood Rescue capability, which also incorporates our Swift Water Rescue Team. Additionally, we self-fund our own High Volume Pump (HVP) capability and a UAS.

As a signatory of the National Coordination and Advisory Framework ([NCAF](#)) National Mutual Aid Protocol, we provide incident support outside the Tyne and Wear area. This agreement establishes the terms for offering or requesting assistance during incidents. The costs associated with these mobilisations are covered by the FRA in the area where the incident occurs and are subsequently reclaimed by our Service. The National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) coordinates any out-of-area deployments.

Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme

The JESIP concept provides a multi-agency framework designed to enhance interoperability among partner agencies responding to emergencies. We implement these principles in our collaborative efforts to manage incidents requiring a multi-agency response. Our commitment to the JESIP principle is demonstrated through qualitative assurance metrics such as online learning, incident command training, and participation levels at multi-agency exercises and incidents. The adoption and effectiveness of JESIP are monitored and assessed via competency-based training delivery and exercise provisions to ensure advancements interoperability.

Our Service is represented on the Emergency Services Coordination Board (ESCB), and our CFO serves as the NFCC strategic lead for JESIP. We are currently leading the JESIP Embedding and Assurance Programme (JEAP) in response to Recommendation 45 of the Manchester Arena Inquiry, Volume 2. Our Service is leading the sector nationally on JESIP and several recommendations from the Manchester Arena Inquiry have produced 48 recommendations applicable to UK FRS' which are being monitored by the NFCC. We are also responsible for reporting on our progress to the Home Office.

Business Continuity Management

Business Continuity Management (BCM) is an integral aspect of our emergency preparedness arrangements and is a legal requirement for Category 1 responders. All FRAs must comply with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 concerning BCM processes and procedures.

The Service is required to 'write and maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurs the Authority can continue its critical functions, including periods of industrial action. Business Continuity Plans (BCP) protect

the Authority from adverse events and business interruptions, facilitating a rapid and effective recovery of critical functions during and after such events. BCPs are regularly reviewed and tested within each department and function as part of an annual testing schedule coordinated by our Business Assurance Manager, supported by the wider Risk and Resilience team. The plans undergo annual reviews and testing yearly, at a minimum, to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

Control of Major Accident Hazards

Under the legislative requirements of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the [Control of Major Accident Hazards \(COMAH\) Regulations 2015](#), and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, we have a statutory duty to provide an effective and resilient COMAH function. In Tyne and Wear, there are currently five upper tier COMAH sites, with a sixth expected to become operational in 2025 in Washington.

We have established substantial emergency response arrangements to safely manage these premises. Our COMAH team produces comprehensive external emergency plans to assist emergency services in the event of an incident at any of these locations. Recent collaborative efforts have included working private sector manufacturing partners in anticipation of acquiring our sixth upper-tier COMAH site (Envision), which is expected to be the largest lithium-ion manufacturing and storage facility in Europe.

8. FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

In addition to the core operational effectiveness work of the Service, the prevention of fires and other emergencies through risk management, education, prevention, protection, response, and resilience; the Service also focuses on efficiency and looking after our people as set out in our strategy; TWFRS 2025.

All projects, priorities and improvement actions directly contribute to the achievement of the TWFRS Strategy 2025, and/or to the improvement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Service and are monitored by our Programme Office and reported to the Programme Board for effective challenge and scrutiny.

Throughout 2024/2025 the Service have developed a revised strategy document to replace TWFRS 2025 as this programme of work is nearing completion. The new document titled 'Our Strategy, Our Future' has undergone robust consultation, and developed in a way that will provide clarity and understanding to staff and the public of the Service's goals and priorities. This refresh strategy will be launched in 2025/2026.

Several support activities are also included within department objectives in addition to plans to support the implementation of our latest CRMP.

Those six overarching objectives are:

- **Enhanced Firefighter Safety**

With further development of, and investment in, our operational training facilities, including the continued development of an 'all hazards village' at our Training Centre. We will deliver replacement breathing apparatus, PPE, a new Hydrant Management System and several other projects all aimed at maintaining and enhancing the safety of our firefighters.

- **Investment in Technology**

We will continue to invest in technology to enhance efficiency and safety and support risk management. This includes replacing our server infrastructure, virtual reality to support fire investigation, and making further improvements to the HR system. We will continue to review cyber resilience arrangements and continue an operational communications programme, including a new mobilising system.

- **Investment in People, Inclusion, and Workforce Diversification**

We will strive to increase the diversity of our workforce to reflect the community we serve and enhance inclusion across the Service. We will do this by driving improvements to how we recruit, include, and retain staff from minority groups. We will continue to invest in our staff and seek and make improvements to the employee experience.

- **Develop our Estate Portfolio**

We will continue to invest in our owned estate portfolio. This includes planning a new Safety Education Centre. We will also install electric vehicle charging points at selected locations across our sites and continue to reduce our impact on the environment.

- **Effective Use of Resources and Value for Money**

We will provide a modern, effective and efficient Service, managing our budget to provide value for money. We will make investments where appropriate to provide a modern, fit for purpose response, using resources economically. Investment and value for money are a major part of all project considerations.

Our CRMP presents how we aim to do business in the next three financial years, outlining how we are reviewing our resources to meet the changing needs of our community and adapting to evolving risks.

- **Drive Continuous Improvement and Enhance Assurance across the Service**

We will maintain our focus on a continuous improvement culture throughout the Service. We will support continuous improvement in the Service by engaging in audit, inspection and peer review activities, and adopting learning and good practice.

We will continue to implement improvements identified in previous HMICFRS inspections, internal audits and assurance reviews. We will work closely with the NFCC to embed Fire Standards. Continuous Improvement and enhancing assurance are a major part of all project considerations.

The Performance and Improvement Board monitors progress against annual department plans on a quarterly basis and provides updates to the Executive Leadership Team. The Service has introduced a Strategic Improvement Plan, to be implemented in 2025/2026. This plan aims to assure the Board that the Service's transformational work is progressing and to provide an opportunity for critical evaluation.

Moreover, the information and data compiled in this report, along with our quarterly performance reports and reports to the Authority and its committees, enable us to track our performance and progress against our plans.

9. CONCLUSION

Our Statement of Assurance offers a comprehensive overview of how we maintain high standards of governance, financial and operational performance for our communities. We are confident that processes and controls in place provide assurance regarding our arrangements across the Service.

Additionally, many of these arrangements have been independently scrutinised by external agencies, further reinforcing our confidence in their effectiveness.

We acknowledge that, in an ever-changing environment, there are ongoing challenges for us as a Service. However, we remain optimistic that our positive culture of continuous improvement enables us to effectively manage these challenges, allowing us to build on a solid foundation for sustaining high levels of service delivery.

10. GLOSSARY

AFI	Area For Improvement
ALP	Aerial Ladder Platform
ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
BCM	Business Continuity Management
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
BSR	Building Safety Regulator
CBRN	Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear
CFO	Chief Fire Officer
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CIPS	Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply
COMAH	Control of Major Accident Hazards
CRMP	Community Risk Management Plan
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DIM	Detection identification and monitoring
DPO	Data Protection Officer
ED&I	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
EFAD	Emergency Fire Appliance Driving
ELS	Enhanced Logistics Support
ESCB	Emergency Services Coordination Board
FBU	Fire Brigades Union
FDO	Flexi Duty Officer
FRA	Fire Rescue Authority
FREC3	First Response Emergency Care Level 3
FRS	Fire Rescue Service
FSB	Fire Standards Board
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
HMICFRS	His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services
HRRB	Higher-Risk Residential Building
HSE	Health and Safety Executive

HVP	High Volume Pump
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IEC	Immediate Emergency Care
IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standards
IOSH	Institution of Occupational Safety and Health
IRMP	Integrated Risk Management Plan
JCF	Joint Consultative Forum
JESIP	Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme
JEAP	JESIP Embedding and Assurance Programme
JOL	Joint Organisational Learning
LGV	Large Goods Vehicle
LRF	Local Resilience Forum
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
MCIPS	Member of the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply
MDT	Mobile Data Terminals
MOU	Memorandums of Understanding
MTA	Marauding Terrorist Attack
NCAF	National Coordination and Advisory Framework
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NFCC	National Fire Chiefs Council
NHAIS	National Health Application and Infrastructure Services
NILO	National Inter-Agency Liaison Officer
NOG	National Operational Guidance
NOL	National Operational Learning
NRAT	National Resilience Assurance Team
OAG	Operational Assurance Working Group
OHU	Occupational Health Unit
PAS	Primary Authority Scheme
PCR	Public Contracts Regulations
PDR	Performance and Development Reviews
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
RBIP	Risk-Based Inspection Programme
RIDDOR	Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations
RTC	Road traffic collision
SGA	Strategic Gap Analysis
SIRO	Senior Information Risk Owner
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
TST	Ten Second Triage
UAS	Un-crewed Air Support Unit
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue
VTs	Vehicle Training School