



Meeting	Performance & Resources Board	Agenda no.	15
Meeting Date	20 May 2024		
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Subject	Annual Workforce Report 2023-2024		
Type of Report:	Information		
Action Point No.	n/a	For Publication	Yes/No

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is for noting. This paper provides an overview for the P&R Board on the Service's workforce for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Annual Workforce report provides an annual snapshot of our workforce and looks back on the previous financial year. Data is broken down into four employee groups (i.e. Wholetime, On-Call, Control and Support). This report provides commentary on the headline topics from the data and focuses on the areas where there has been the biggest change since the previous report.

BACKGROUND

For the purposes of this paper a series of data extracts were taken from our HR information system to drill down to the specific workforce metrics. Exit interview data and Recruitment and Selection data have also been used to provide further analysis.

Calculations for averages and percentages have been rounded to one decimal place.

Where reference is made to national statistics the source is Fire and Rescue Workforce and Pension Statistics: [Fire and rescue workforce and pensions statistics: England, year ending March 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fire-and-rescue-workforce-and-pensions-statistics-england-year-ending-march-2023)

Please see Appendix for further detailed Workforce Demographics data.

OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS – ACTION BEING TAKEN

Workforce Demographic Action

Whilst the Service's workforce demographics are broadly comparable to the national picture for fire and rescue services in England, there is still more we need to do.

Table 2 – 8 in the Appendix provides information on five diversity characteristics – Age (Table 2 and Table 3), Gender/Sex (Table 4 and Table 5), Ethnicity (Table 6), Disability (Table 7) and Sexual Orientation (Table 8).

In our People Strategy 2020-24 we gave a commitment to reviewing our recruitment approaches and assessment and selection methodology. Fairness, inclusion and diversity was a strong thread through these commitments and has been recognised by AFSA in our Service winning the Positive Action Award for making positive action a priority in our recruitment strategy, with recruitment streams including: regular online public Q&A sessions and the use of social media to engage with younger audiences.

As part of our People Strategy we committed to updating our recruitment system to improve the experience for applicants and give more control to managers. Our new recruitment portal went live in October and is a much more user-friendly and streamlined system for managers and candidates. It is hoped this will help us to attract the right people with the right skills, establishing us as an employer of choice and meet our digital-first commitment to recruitment.

Our Service has achieved Silver Inclusive Employers Standard accreditation to recognise our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Of particular significance was our Service's dedication to collecting robust diversity data and adapting network groups to meet evolving needs.

Our last Gender Pay Gap report showed that our Service's gender pay gap has almost closed over the last year. There is a 2.8% pay gap (median), which is significantly lower than the UK national average of 7.7% for full-time workers. We continue with a programme of positive action in recruitment in our commitment to achieving a workforce that is more reflective of our communities. We will continue to work with our employee networks, partners and stakeholders to gain feedback and understand how we can bring about positive change based on feedback from colleagues. Our more recent change was to enhance maternity leave and pay, which sees full pay for the first 26 weeks, and is a prime example of where our diversity networks have championed positive change within our Service.

Nationally the number and proportion of female firefighters has slowly increased to 8.7 per cent in 2023 (most recent numbers). The Service has been continuing the commitment to increasing gender diversity. As of 31 March 2024, 11.5 per cent of firefighting personnel (i.e., Wholetime and On Call combined) of recorded gender identity were female.

As of 31 March 2024, 6.1 per cent of firefighting personnel (i.e., Wholetime and On Call combined) of recorded ethnicity identified as a non-white, ethnic minority, up from 2.9 per cent in 2022/23. Our drive to encourage colleagues to declare self-classification diversity data has shown a reduction in the number of not recorded records for ethnicity and sexual orientation.

The overall age profile has moved down an age banding, with the majority of employees now in the 36-45 band, which further demonstrates that our positive action focus is starting to work. The average age of all firefighting personnel (i.e. Wholetime and On Call combined) on 31 March 2024 was 40.7 years.

Turnover Actions

Table 13 in the Appendix details our workforce turnover by employee group. Turnover rates remain healthy and have decreased slightly across all employee groups. Mitigations have been put in place during 2023/24 in relation to the unplanned turnover from London Fire Brigade and Suffolk Control.

Whilst leaver data provides some insights, it is the exit interviews and questionnaire where we are able to gain a better understanding to inform what actions may be required. When colleagues resign from the Service, they are invited to complete an exit interview questionnaire. This is optional, but we encourage colleagues to take up this opportunity in order to gain a better understanding of the drivers for our turnover and identify any interventions which may be required.

44 online exit interview submissions were received in 2023/24, reflecting 23.5% of all leavers during the period. Response rates were as follows:

Employee Group	Leavers	Exit Questionnaire Submissions	Response Rate
Wholetime	47	14	29.8%
On-Call	83	11	13.3%
Control	3	3	100%
Support	46	14	30.4%
OVERALL	179	42	23.5%

Just 2 (4.8%) of all respondents chose to remain anonymous and their responses are excluded from any analysis in this section.

Leavers are provided with a web link to the online questionnaire and do not need to be logged in via the Service network to complete it.

Please note that exit questionnaires can be submitted at any time following resignation or after leaving the Service. Therefore, some of the questionnaires reported above may be for leavers outside of the 2023/24 reporting period.

Primary reasons for leaving were recorded in exit questionnaires as:

- Wholetime: 50% of all respondents indicated that were retiring to take their full pension. A further 14.3% indicated that they were leaving to join another fire and rescue service.
- On Call: 54.5% left for personal reasons (including/work life balance). A further 9.1% left for unspecified reasons.
- Control: all respondents indicated that they were leaving to work for another fire and rescue service.

- Support: 21.4% of respondents indicated that they were leaving to take up alternative employment. A further 7.1% indicated that they were leaving to draw their full pension.

Across all employee groups, 69% (73.3% in 2022/23) of all exit questionnaire respondents indicated that they would return to the Service should a suitable opportunity present itself.

Employee Group	"I would return to the service for the right opportunity"
Wholetime	86%
On-Call	55%
Control	67%
Support	64%
OVERALL	69%

The Strategic Workforce Plan indicates that turnover will increase over the next five years, given the age of our Wholetime employees. This is being addressed through the programme of recruitment and the work the Lead People Partners continue to do with the Group Managers to map and plan the next six to twelve months, with consideration given to retirements, LRS and the expected completed dates for candidates and portfolio development plans.

Absence Actions

The People Partnering Team have continued to proactively support absence case management as part of the wider attendance management agenda. When an absence reaches the 28 day trigger support is provided with the aim of consistency and early intervention. As a result, there was an increase in the number of formal cases.

Overall, our absence rates have increased (as outlined in Table 17) with 4,280 more working days lost to sickness absence than in 2022/23. There has been a strong focus on supporting our colleagues back to work following any periods of sickness absence.

Our Service's Fitness Policy had a phased relaunch and became fully implemented on the 1st January 2024. The Fitness Team continue to work with individuals and their managers that are currently below the required level to mitigate risk of impacting our Service commitments.

The wellbeing element of the People Strategy 2020-24 has focused on mental and physical health, as well as financial health and social activity, healthy eating and fitness. Management referral data shows that mental health and musculoskeletal remain the main reasons for referrals. Many of the management referrals around mental health will have been referred on for counselling or specialist trauma therapy; we have a network of counsellors and therapists across the county. There has been continued engagement with our Mental Health Community Group on MS Teams, Mental Health First Aid Training and refresher courses have been held.

Employee Relations Actions

There is a continued focus on ER and the significant increase in cases have seen formal cases trending higher each year. However, along with the increase in case numbers we have also seen a significant decrease in the average case duration.

We are continuing to focus on early interventions and resolving issues as early and informally as possible. We have leveraged lessons learned and feedback from previous cases to improve effective resolution of employee relations issues. As a team, we are looking at ways to continuously improve our support to employee issues, such as case reviews. Having effective case management also supports our commitment to continuous improvement and embedding our values and behaviours.

3-part Grievance, Disciplinary and Investigations training is now a requirement for colleagues at Station Manager and Green Book equivalent. The training provides managers with an in depth understanding of the investigations process, providing the knowledge and tools to confidently support, deescalate and resolve cases. The training equips managers with the essential skills to manage their teams effectively, focusing on constructive conversation and evidence-gathering.

Since our Service launched the Safe Share Service in January 2023 the confidential telephone number and email mailbox has built trust. The Safe Share Service is demonstrating a positive impact with early intervention with colleagues feeling safe to speak up and to discuss concerns relating to self and/or others and to be confident that cases will be handled objectively and confidentially.

On the 6 July 2023 the Government amended The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2023 to include Fire and Rescue Service employees. We are working hard to make sure everyone in our Service upholds the highest professional and personal standards, for the benefit of our communities. We consider it appropriate to carry out a minimum of Standard level DBS check on existing colleagues, and Enhanced (without barred list) for operational colleagues and have been carrying out these checks across our Service.

During 2023-24 we have reviewed and relaunched 8 People policies: Abatement Policy, Special Leave Policy, Expenses Policy, Transfer Policy, Grievance Policy, Secondary Employment, Green Book Overtime and Expenses Policy. With a further two updated due to legislative changes: Paternity Leave Policy and Flexible Working Policy.

The average time to close cases continues to drop from 81.8 days in 2022/23 to 72 days in 2023/24. (It should be noted that the average case duration in 2021/22 was 108 days). This reduction is a reflection on the strong focus on reducing the length of long-term sickness absence cases as well as tightening the timescales on investigations.

See Table 18 for a full breakdown of the Service's employee relations casework during 2023/24 with comparison to the previous financial year.

RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

There are no additional risk management implications.

Strategic risk - SRR150005

There is a risk that the Service does not develop and manage its people effectively therefore not delivering a range of activities which save lives, prevent harm, and protect our communities due to failure to deliver against the Service's People Strategy and have the right people, in the right place, with the right skills, at the right time.

Control measure - SRR150005/003

Efficient workforce planning and recruitment procedures.

LINKS TO FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN

As set out in the Fire and Rescue Plan

- Promoting a positive culture in the workplace
- Be transparent, open, and accessible
- Make best use of our resources

As well as the following Service Values

- Value the contribution of all
- Always professional
- Work as one team

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

There are no staffing implications as a result of this report.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

The actions being taken will not have a disproportionate impact on individuals with protected characteristics (as defined within the Equality Act 2010), when compared to all other individuals and will not disadvantage people with protected characteristics.

Race	N	Religion or belief	N
Sex	N	Gender reassignment	N
Age	N	Pregnancy & maternity	N
Disability	N	Marriage and Civil Partnership	N
Sexual orientation	N		

The Core Code of Ethics Fire Standard has been fully considered and incorporated into the proposals outlined in this paper.

This Workforce Report does not have any direct impact on protected groups as defined within the Equality Act. However, each individual policy and deliverables under the People Strategy has a full People Impact Assessment which demonstrates consideration of all impacts arising from them.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no health and safety implications associated with this report.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Our current approach to consultation and negotiation complements our formal mechanism – the Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (JNCC). The schedule of consultation involves seeking acceptable solutions to problems through a genuine exchange of views and information.

FUTURE PLANS

Work will continue within the 2023-24 Annual Plan: HR

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AND APPENDICES

As below

1. APPENDIX

All values are rounded to the nearest 0.1/0.1%

Table 1: Workforce Headcount / FTE					
Employee Group	31 Mar 2023		31 Mar 2024		FTE Variance
	Headcount	FTE	Headcount	FTE	
Wholetime	631	631.0	621	621.0	-10.0
On-Call	511	404.5	509	402.3	-2.2
Control	42	37.9	41	38.1	+0.2
Support	336	311.9	347	321.4	+9.5
OVERALL	1,520	1,385.3	1,518	1,382.7	-2.6

This section covers information on five diversity characteristics – age, sex, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation. We also look to compare our staff data to the population we serve and work within and also to national fire and rescue service data.

Table 2: Age Profile				
Employee Group	Mean	Median	Min	Max
Wholetime	42.3	43.0	18	63
On-Call	38.8	38.0	19	71
Control	42.0	40.0	22	61
Support	46.0	47.0	19	72
OVERALL	42.0	42.0	18	72

Based upon age at last birthday as at 31 March 2024.

Table 3: Majority Age Group				
Employee Group	31 Mar 2023		31 Mar 2024	
	Majority Group	% of Employees in Group	Majority Group	% of Employees in Group
Wholetime	46-55	37.9%	46-55	35.4%
On-Call	25-35	34.6%	25-35	31.8%
Control	36-45	40.5%	36-45	39.0%
Support	46-55	26.2%	46-55	26.2%
OVERALL	46-55	28.8%	36-45	30.0%

Table 4: Sex Distribution				
Employee Group	31 Mar 2023		31 Mar 2024	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Wholetime	93.0%	7.0%	92.0%	7.3%
On-Call	96.9%	3.1%	95.9%	4.5%
Control	14.3%	85.7%	12.2%	87.8%
Support	47.3%	52.7%	43.8%	56.2%
OVERALL	82.0%	18.0%	80.3%	19.7%

Table 5: Gender Identity Distribution								
Employee Group	31 Mar 2023				31 Mar 2024			
	Male	Female	Other	Not Recorded	Male	Female	Other	Not Recorded
Wholetime	82.7%	6.8%	1.0%	9.5%	82.8%	7.2%	1.1%	8.9%
On-Call	91.0%	2.9%	0.6%	5.5%	89.6%	4.3%	0.6%	5.5%
Control	14.3%	85.7%	0%	0%	12.2%	87.8%	0%	0%
Support	45.5%	51.2%	0%	3.3%	42.4%	54.8%	0%	2.9%
OVERALL	75.4%	17.5%	0.6%	6.5%	74.0%	19.2%	0.7%	6.2%

Note: 'Not Recorded' figure includes 'not stated' and 'prefer not to say' responses

Table 6: Ethnicity						
Employee Group	31 Mar 2023			31 Mar 2024		
	White ¹	Other ²	Not Recorded	White ¹	Other ²	Not Recorded
Wholetime	73.1%	3.5%	23.5%	74.0%	4.3%	21.7%
On-Call	73.4%	2.0%	24.7%	73.9%	1.8%	24.4%
Control	92.9%	2.4%	4.8%	87.8%	4.9%	7.3%
Support	80.4%	3.6%	16.1%	78.1%	3.7%	18.2%
OVERALL	75.3%	3.0%	21.7%	75.3%	3.3%	21.4%

Note 1: 'White' figure includes: White British, White English, White Gypsy or Irish Traveller, White Irish, White Northern Irish, White Scottish and White Welsh.

Note 2: 'Other' figure includes all other actively disclosed ethnic backgrounds.

Note 3: 'Not Recorded' figure includes 'not stated' and 'prefer not to say' responses

Significant efforts by I&D BP have resulted in dramatic increase in ethnic origins being identified by employees

Table 7: Disability				
Employee Group	31 Mar 2023		31 Mar 2024	
	Disability	Not Stated	Disability	Not Stated
Wholetime	3.8%	96.2%	4.5%	95.5%
On-Call	5.1%	94.9%	5.1%	94.9%
Control	2.4%	97.6%	4.9%	95.1%
Support	5.4%	94.6%	5.8%	94.2%
OVERALL	4.5%	95.5%	5.0%	95.0%

Table 8: Sexual Orientation			
Employee Group	Heterosexual	LGBQ+	Not Recorded
Wholetime	56.8%	4.9%	37.8%
On-Call	56.0%	2.2%	42.1%
Control	80.5%	0%	19.5%
Support	69.2%	4.6%	26.2%
OVERALL	60.0%	3.6%	35.8%

Note: 'Not recorded' figure includes "not stated" and "prefer not to say" responses

Workforce joiner diversity

Table 9: Workforce Joiner Sex Distribution				
Employee Group	2022-23		2023-24	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Wholetime	95.9%	4.1%	87.9%	12.1%
On-Call	95.5%	4.5%	86.1%	13.9%
Control	14.3%	85.7%	50.0%	50.0%
Support	45.6%	54.4%	28.8%	71.2%
OVERALL	78.7%	21.3%	66.3%	33.7%

Table 10: Workforce Joiner Gender Identity Distribution								
Employee Group	2022-23				2023-24			
	Male	Female	Other	Not Recorded	Male	Female	Other	Not Recorded
Wholetime	93.9%	4.1%	0%	2.0%	87.9%	12.1%	0%	0%
On-Call	95.5%	4.5%	0%	0%	86.1%	13.9%	0%	0%
Control	14.3%	85.7%	0%	0%	50.0%	50.0%	0%	0%
Support	45.6%	54.4%	0%	0%	28.8%	71.2%	0%	0%
OVERALL	78.2%	21.3%	0%	0.5%	66.3%	33.7%	0%	0%

Not recorded figure includes “not stated” and “prefer not to say” responses

Table 11: Workforce Joiner Ethnicity						
Employee Group	2022-23			2023-24		
	White ¹	Other ²	Not Recorded	White ¹	Other ²	Not Recorded
Wholetime	73.5%	8.2%	18.4%	81.8%	12.1%	6.1%
On-Call	79.8%	5.6%	14.6%	74.7%	1.3%	24.1%
Control	100%	0%	0%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%
Support	56.1%	7.0%	36.8%	55.9%	8.5%	35.6%
OVERALL	72.3%	6.4%	21.3%	68.6%	6.3%	25.1%

Note 1: ‘White’ figure includes: White British, White English, White Gypsy or Irish Traveller, White Irish, White Northern Irish, White Scottish and White Welsh.

Note 2: ‘Other’ figure includes all other actively disclosed ethnic backgrounds.

Note 3: ‘Not Recorded’ figure includes ‘not stated’ and ‘prefer not to say’ responses

Table 12: Workforce Joiner Age Distribution						
Employee Group	17-24	25-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+
Wholetime	24.2%	54.5%	18.2%	3.0%	0.0%	0%
On-Call	20.3%	38.0%	31.6%	10.1%	0.0%	0%
Control	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0%
Support	8.5%	37.3%	27.1%	22.0%	5.1%	0%
OVERALL	17.1%	40.6%	26.9%	13.7%	1.7%	0%

Turnover

Table 13: Workforce Turnover		
Employee Group	2022-23	2023-24
Wholetime	7.0%	6.9%
On-Call	16.6%	13.6%
Control	7.3%	9.6%
Support	12.8%	12.3%
OVERALL	11.3%	10.3%

Leavers

Table 14: Reasons for Leaving – 2023-24								
Employee Group	Transfer to other service	Retirement	Resignation	Redundancy	End of Contract	Dismissal	Death	Not Recorded
Wholetime	19.1%	63.8%	12.8%	0%	0%	2.1%	2.1%	0%
On-Call	1.2%	8.4%	85.5%	0%	0%	4.8%	0%	0%
Control	0%	33.3%	33.3%	0%	0%	33.3%	0%	0%
Support	0%	19.6%	52.2%	4.3%	21.7%	2.2%	0%	0%
OVERALL	5.6%	26.3%	57.0%	1.1%	5.6%	3.9%	0.6%	0%

Please note that the information presented in Table 14 above is based upon the reasons for leaving recorded in Civica, which may not correspond with the reasons indicated in exit interviews.

Table 15: Length of Service at Leaving – 2023-24						
Employee Group	< 1 Year	1-3 Years	4-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-20 Years	20 Years +
Wholetime	4.3%	10.6%	8.5%	0.0%	17.0%	59.6%
On-Call	13.3%	36.1%	9.6%	14.5%	16.9%	9.6%
Control	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%
Support	26.1%	17.4%	6.5%	21.7%	10.9%	17.4%
OVERALL	14.5%	24.0%	8.4%	12.3%	16.2%	24.6%

Joiners/Recruitment

Table 15: Joiners		
Employee Group	2022-23	2023-24
Wholetime	49	38
On-Call	89	79
Control	7	4
Support	57	59
OVERALL	202	180

ABSENCE

Table 17: Sickness Absence – 2023-24			
Employee Group	Working Days Lost in 2023-24	% of Available Working Days Lost	National Absence Survey Comparison ¹
Wholetime	7,211.5	6.3%	6.25%
On-Call	10,136.5	8.0%	n/a ²
Control	626.0	8.8%	6.23%
Support	3,407.0	4.1%	3.94%
OVERALL	21,381.0	6.4%	n/a

Note 1: At the time of writing (April 2024) national FRS benchmark absence figures for the full 2023-24 financial year were unavailable, however, for the 9 months to Dec 2023, comparison absence rates were as displayed.

Note 2: National comparisons are not available for On Call personnel.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

The following table presents the Service's employee relations casework metrics for 2023/24, compared to the same figures for the 2022/23 year.

Table 18: Casework Volumes ¹ 2023/24												
Case Type	Number of New Cases in Year			Number of Cases Closed in Year			Average Case Duration (Calendar Days)			Number of Cases Open at Year End		
	2022/23	2023/24	TREND	2022/23	2023/24	TREND	2022/23	2023/24	TREND	2022/23	2023/24	TREND
Attendance	99	104	↑	110	82	↓	84.8	75	↓	25	42	↑
Disciplinary ²	10	23	↑	13	20	↑	84.2	92	↑	1	8	↑
Grievance	10	29	↑	10	23	↑	40.0	59	↑	2	8	↑
Performance ³	16	9	↓	15	8	↓	91.4	28	↓	5	5	←
OVERALL	135	165	↑	148	133	↓	81.8	72	↓	33	63	↑

Note 1: Formal casework only

Note 2: Combined figures for Disciplinary and Disciplinary – Suspension cases

Note 3: Combined figures for Performance and Performance - Fitness cases

The data presented in the above table was obtained from the Power BI dashboard that has been created to present summaries of casework data, as recorded in the SharePoint casework tracking tool developed at the end of 2022/23. Fitness related Performance cases will be presented separately from 2024/25.