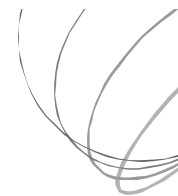


Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Authority

Performance audit report 2006

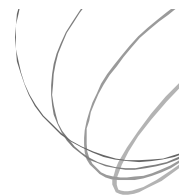
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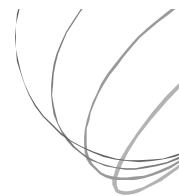


Executive summary

1. Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Authority (the FRA) has a clear, long-term vision for the future which reflects the aspirations in the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and the national framework for fire and rescue services, and is based on a robust analysis of local risks. The authority has a well-established approach to service planning, supported by sound project and performance management arrangements.
2. Board members are engaged with the FRA and supportive of its increasing emphasis on prevention. However, there is a risk that some of the Board's collective experience could be lost following the local elections in May 2007 and there is scope for the FRA to increase its support for members' training and development needs.
3. Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) is mainstreamed within corporate and service planning and the FRA has made sophisticated use of risk modelling to inform decisions on the optimum location of stations, and the redeployment of staff and other resources.
4. The FRA has embarked on a major programme of home fire safety visits to reduce domestic fire risks, with 72,000 visits completed in 2005/06. However, the FRA needs to provide further support and training to operational staff undertaking visits to ensure they are fully engaged and properly trained. The FRA also undertakes a wide range of other community fire safety activities but needs to adopt a more systematic approach to evaluating the impact of this work. This is important given that the FRA cannot yet demonstrate a sustained improvement in the levels of risk across the region.
5. The FRA invests significant resources in local partnership working. However, it has yet to develop a strategic approach to managing and evaluating its partnership activity, and cannot assess the extent to which partnerships are contributing to its overall strategic objectives or whether these resources are being used to best effect.
6. The FRA has a good understanding of the people and skills it needs to meet its strategic objectives, and manages workforce issues within a clear business planning framework, supported by detailed performance information. It has made good progress on developing and implementing a range of policies to enable greater flexibility and more efficient use of resources, for example on duty systems and mixed crewing. Arrangements for the delivery of the equality and diversity agenda are well developed but there is a long way to go before the workforce reflects the diversity of communities it serves.
7. Overall, the FRA has made good progress since the 2004 Accounts Commission Phase 2 Verification Audit. It has implemented the transition from rank to role, introduced the Integrated Personal



Development System (IPDS) to wholetime and retained staff and agreed a range of flexible working options. The FRA now needs focus on continuous improvement by implementing its Service Improvement Plan, ensuring staff are fully engaged in the strategic direction of the authority and taking a more strategic approach to working in partnership with other agencies.

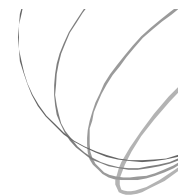


Introduction

Background

8. Fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) across the UK are undergoing an extensive programme of modernisation following the National Joint Council (NJC) agreement on pay and conditions in 2003. This programme of change is intended to move authorities towards a more targeted and risk-based approach to prevention, protection and emergency response.
9. As part of the NJC agreement, the Accounts Commission undertook a verification exercise to examine whether the intended benefits of the various national changes under modernisation were being delivered locally by Scotland's eight FRAs. This was conducted in two phases during 2004, with progress reports produced in March and October of that year¹.
10. The second verification exercise reported that progress was being made in Scotland and that the building blocks were in place. However, the report concluded there was still a significant amount of work to be done before real change would be delivered on the ground. As a result, the Accounts Commission asked Audit Scotland to undertake a performance audit of the Scottish FRAs during 2006, to include a review of the overall outcomes of modernisation.
11. Following the NJC agreement, *The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005* established a statutory framework to enable Scottish FRAs to modernise their services. The Act is accompanied by a statutory *Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland*, finalised in September 2005, which sets out priorities, objectives and guidance for FRAs.
12. With enabling legislation and a new statutory framework in place, the Commission agreed a project brief for a national performance audit of FRAs, in February 2006. The overall focus of the audit was to assess the extent to which FRAs are achieving the objectives of modernisation, and in particular whether:
 - Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) are effectively supporting the change in emphasis from intervention to prevention, and
 - the progress to modernisation is reflected in the culture of the organisation.
13. During the summer and autumn of 2006, an Audit Scotland performance audit team visited all eight FRAs. In each authority, the audit team conducted an extensive range of interviews, reviewed relevant

¹ Accounts Commission (2004) Scottish Fire Services. Verification of the progress of modernisation (March) and the second verification of the progress of modernisation (October).



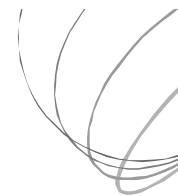
documents and analysed performance information. The audit team assessed six areas of performance:

- strategic management
- fire prevention and risk management
- financial management
- workforce management
- management of operational business
- communication.

14. This local audit report presents our findings and conclusions against these six areas for Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Authority. A national report summarising our findings on all Scottish Fire and Rescue Authorities will be published in February 2007.
15. In conducting the local audit work, Audit Scotland reviewed inspection reports on Lothian and Borders FRA by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland (HMFSIS), which had carried out a follow-up inspection in February 2005.
16. We gratefully acknowledge the co-operation and assistance provided to the audit team by the many councillors, FRA staff and other stakeholders who assisted us in our audit work.

Local context

17. Lothian and Borders FRA delivers services across an area covering 6,456 sq km —8.3% of Scotland — and delivers services to a population of 902,330, representing 17.7% of Scotland's population at June 2005. This equates to a population density of 1.4 persons per hectare against the Scottish average of 1.1 per ha (65 persons per sq km), although the population density varies widely across the region. The population is substantially increased by influxes of visitors at peaks points each year.
18. The FRA serves five local authority areas —the City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian and Scottish Borders. The region is diverse, spanning remote rural areas and densely populated urban centres.
19. The population of Lothian and Borders is projected to rise by over 11.5% overall by 2024, compared to an overall increase of 0.8% in Scotland's total population. Within the FRA's area, the population is forecast to increase in West Lothian (+21%), The Scottish Borders (+15%), East Lothian (+13%), City of Edinburgh (+10%), but to decrease in Midlothian (-2%). The population of West Lothian is currently growing faster than any other area of the country, and is predicted to continue doing so. This creates



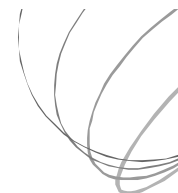
particular challenges for the FRA in planning the delivery of services to local communities in the future.

20. The percentage of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) residents in each local authority ranges between 0.6% in The Scottish Borders to 4.1% in the City of Edinburgh. Overall, 22% of Scotland's BME residents live in Lothian and Borders. The increasing diversity of the population brings specific challenges to the FRA, particularly around risk reduction, language barriers and in ensuring that the community fire safety message can be communicated effectively across all communities.
21. There is a wide variation in the level of deprivation across Lothian and Borders, and a strong link between living in an area of deprivation and being at risk from fire. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is the Scottish Executive's official tool for identifying concentrations of multiple deprivation across Scotland.
22. The SIMD published in 2006 divides Scotland up into 6,505 small geographical areas (called 'data zones') with a median population size of 769. The proportion of the population living in the most deprived 15% of all Scottish data zones is 11% in the City of Edinburgh, 6% in West Lothian, 5% in Midlothian, 2% in The Scottish Borders and only 1% in East Lothian.

The Fire and Rescue Authority

23. Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Board is a Joint Board, covering the five constituent local authorities of the City of Edinburgh, West Lothian, Midlothian, East Lothian and The Scottish Borders. The Board comprises 18 elected members from across all constituent authorities: nine from the City of Edinburgh, three from West Lothian, and two each from Midlothian, East Lothian and The Scottish Borders Council. The Convener (City of Edinburgh) is supported by two vice-conveners (East Lothian, West Lothian).
24. The Scottish Executive's Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) allocation of £43.4m for 2006/07 compares to the FRA's total revenue budget of £46.4 million. The budget reflects operating expenditure of £42.2 million, around £1 million below GAE, with the balance transferred to reserves to cater for future expenditure in line with the Service Improvement Plan. Revenue spend is supported by a 2006/07 capital budget of £2.9m.
25. The FRA has 739 full-time firefighting personnel and 310 firefighters employed on a retained basis. In addition, there are 29 control staff and 158 full-time equivalent non-uniform staff². The management

² In this report, the term non-uniformed is used to describe only those staff who are not subject to the NJC Schemes of Conditions of Service Sixth edition 2004. We have used this term in the absence of any nationally agreed description for this group of staff. Some FRAs use 'support staff' and/or 'corporate staff'.

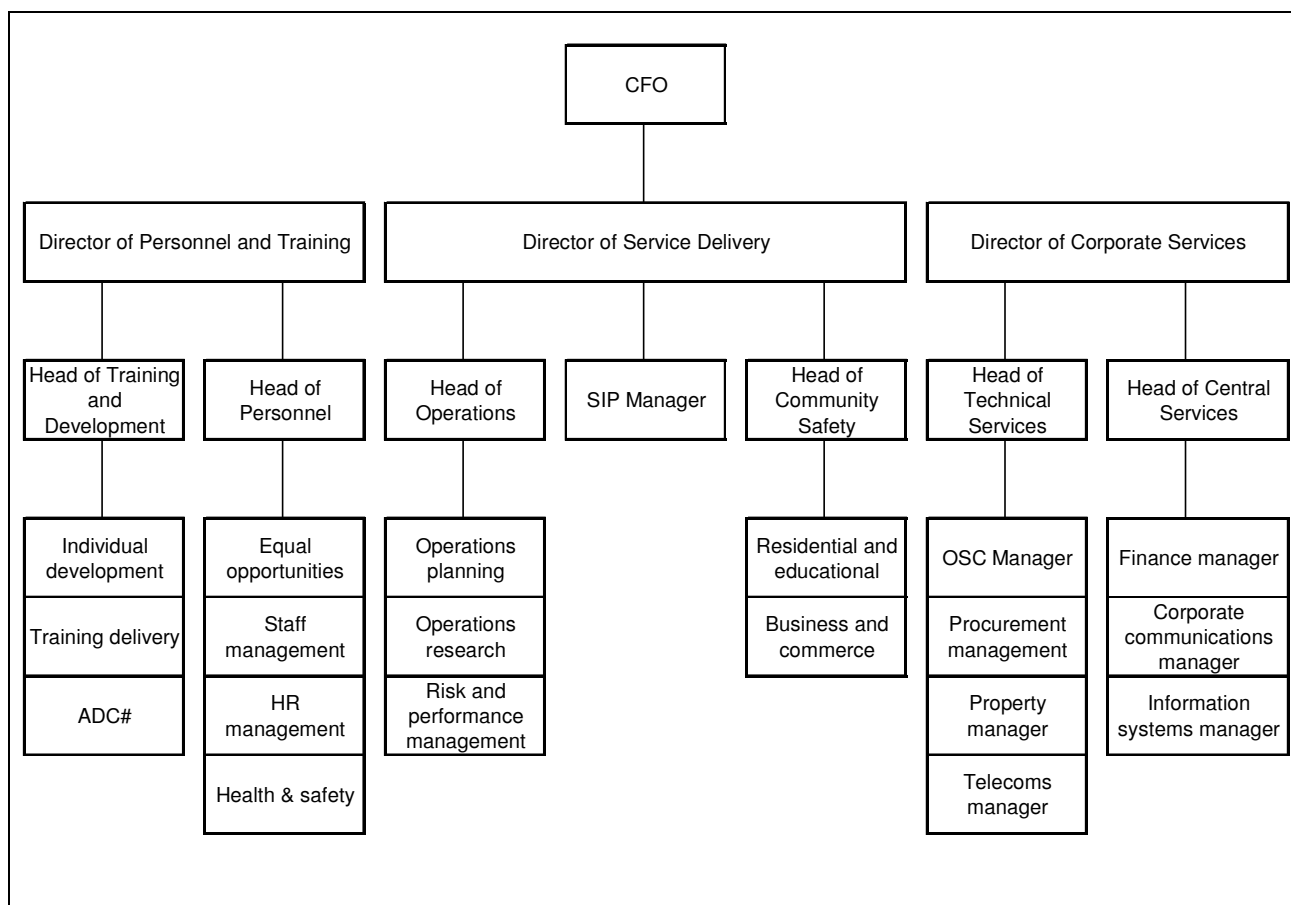


structure comprises three functional areas: Human Resources, Service Delivery and Corporate Services (Exhibit 1), each of which is underpinned by a Service Delivery Group.

Exhibit 1

Organisational structure

The FRA is divided into functional areas



Note: # = Assessment development centre

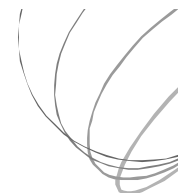
Source: Lothian and Borders Fire & Rescue Service

26. The FRA has introduced a three-tier approach to management designed to delegate responsibility to the lowest appropriate level to enable it to deliver its strategic objectives effectively (Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2

The FRA has a three-tier approach to management

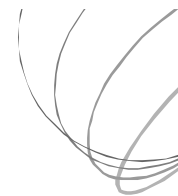
Tier	Name	Membership	Responsibility
1	Corporate Group	Principal Officers Heads of Function	Deciding policy Facilitating policy implementation Auditing efficiency and effectiveness



2	Management Group	Functional Managers	Providing expertise to their functions Developing and advising on policy on behalf of the Corporate Group
3	Service Delivery Group	Service Delivery Managers	Managing service delivery

Source: Lothian and Borders Fire & Rescue Service

27. The FRA headquarters are in Edinburgh and provides services through 36 fire stations across the five council areas. Thirteen fire stations are staffed on a whole-time basis, and three of these also provide an additional retained response. A further 23 fire stations are staffed exclusively by retained personnel. Retained stations are essentially staffed on part-time bases, with firefighters called out from home or work to respond to an emergency at any time.
28. For the purposes of command and management, stations are grouped into Commands, each led by a Group Manager A from the Service Delivery Group.
29. A fleet of fire appliances is complemented by specialist response and command resources, including mass public decontamination, line rescue and urban search and rescue capabilities.
30. In 2005/06, the FRA responded to a total of 21,041 recorded incidents—an average of 58 incidents per day. Of these, 24% (5,138) were secondary fires and 53% (11,256) were false alarms. Primary fires accounted for 14%, or one in seven (2,947) of all incidents.



Part 1: Strategic management

Key findings

- The FRA has articulated a clear strategic direction through the Service Improvement Plan 2005-10, which reflects the aspirations in the national framework for fire and rescue services and is based on a robust analysis of local risks. There is a well-established process for service planning.
- Board members are engaged and committed to the FRA and aware of the challenges of the change programme. However, arrangements for the development of members in relation to their specific duties as members of a fire and rescue board are limited, and the May 2007 local elections present a risk with potential loss of expertise.
- There are comprehensive performance management arrangements which cover performance of individual stations and support services and feed information up through the organisation to high-level reporting by the CFO to the Board on overall performance. However, these are recently established and the impact on performance improvement has still to be demonstrated. The FRA also lacks a staff appraisal scheme which links the performance of its staff to corporate objectives.

Strategic direction

31. The FRA has a clear strategic direction, supported by explicit purposes and a set of values (Exhibit 3).
32. The FRA's vision is articulated through the Service Improvement Plan 2005-2010 (SIP), and cascaded down through the annual Service Plan and Service Profile, which provides detailed objectives for each area of service delivery. The SIP clearly reflects the national framework and the FRA has taken advantage of the flexibility offered by the legislation, with much of the SIP's focus being directed at moving resources towards areas of greatest risk. This is supported by a comprehensive programme of community safety activities.
33. There is a well-established annual service planning process, with summer planning workshops for senior and middle managers, followed by station-based planning meetings and briefings for staff. Corporate and Management Groups then participate in a winter workshop to review progress and confirm corporate and service objectives for the following year. There are also periodic 'away days' for the Corporate Group. Staff are encouraged to contribute to the process and feedback from stations and departments is incorporated into future objectives.

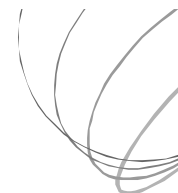


Exhibit 3

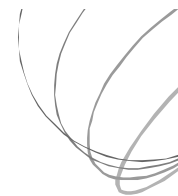
The FRA's vision is supported by its purposes and aims

It is the vision of the FRA...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To excel at providing a high quality service that contributes to a safer community. We will achieve this by developing a forward-looking, professional, cost-effective organisation driven by a highly motivated, empowered workforce.
Through the provision of a quality service, it is the FRA's purpose to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the impact upon the community and the environment of fires and other emergencies and, in doing so, improve community safety and engender a sense of well being within the population living within its boundary by: Reduce the incidence of fire by the provision of an efficient and effective fire safety education advice and legal enforcement service; and Provide an efficient and effective response to fires and other emergencies.
The FRA believes in the following values ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring the health and safety of all our employees and of those who are affected by the service that we provide; Achieving best value in service provision; and, Maintaining a policy of equal opportunity.

Source: Lothian and Borders Fire & Rescue Service

Leadership and governance

34. The external auditor found that significant improvements had been made to corporate governance arrangements during 2005/06, particularly in relation to risk management and revision of Standing Orders to comply with the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005. Corporate governance is concerned with structures and processes for decision-making, accountability, control and behaviours at the upper levels of an organisation.
35. The Board has established a Joint Consultative Group (JCG) to deal with personnel and related matters, and a Scrutiny Committee dealing with organisational performance and audit. The Board and these two sub-committees meet on an eight-week cycle. The Convenor chairs both the Scrutiny Committee and the JCG, affording him a strategic overview. In addition, other sub-committees deal with specific matters such as appointments to senior positions, and firefighting at sea.
36. There is good engagement and involvement of elected members with the FRA. Agreeing the FRA's Service Improvement Plan required the Board to make some difficult decisions in relation to the location and staffing arrangements of fire stations. This has contributed to increasing the engagement of Board members, who are fully aware of the challenges facing the FRA and the reasons for fundamental changes in service delivery. However, there is a risk that some of the Board's collective experience will be lost following the local elections in May 2007.
37. The FRA relies on members receiving generic training from constituent authorities, although it provides some guidance on their roles and responsibilities and gives detailed briefings on significant

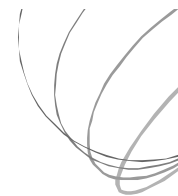


FRA topics such as the Service Improvement Plan and Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS).

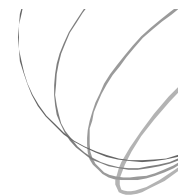
38. There are no plans for introducing training and development for members specifically related to their Board responsibilities as members of a fire and rescue joint board (and how the principles of Best Value relate to these responsibilities) or for undertaking a training needs analysis. The FRA has not explored the potential of lead members or 'champions' for specific areas of service delivery, such as IRMP or equality and diversity, to improve members' awareness and engagement. These issues should be explored in preparation for the new Board being established in 2007, to ensure members are able to discharge their statutory duties under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 and relevant fire legislation fully and effectively.
39. There is a well-developed relationship between the Convenor and the Chief Fire Officer (CFO), who meet weekly, and the CFO has an open-door approach to all members. There is close contact with Board members whose constituencies are set to be affected by new developments, such as a station closure proposal. However, members tend to be less familiar with the role and nature of community safety work than with fire stations.
40. Industrial relations are generally good and support the modernisation changes under way. There is constructive engagement with trade unions by both the senior management and the Board. The JCG comprises six members of Lothian and Borders Fire Board plus a total of 11 representatives of the firefighters, staff, manual workers and craft operatives of the Service appointed from amongst the Fire Brigades Union, National Association of Fire Officers, Unison, and a craft operatives' representative. The purpose of the JCG is to:
 - To provide a means of regular consultation between the Board and employees.
 - To comment on any proposals by Fire Board where they affects employees' pay and conditions.
 - To consider and report on any matter which may be referred to the Joint Group by the Board.
41. Unions are also able to discuss workforce issues with the Scrutiny Committee.

Performance management

42. There are comprehensive performance management arrangements which cover performance of individual stations and support services and feed information up through the organisation. The Corporate Group and the Board's Scrutiny Committee receive regular audit and inspection reports so that progress in implementing the strategic direction can be ascertained and corrective in-year action taken where appropriate.

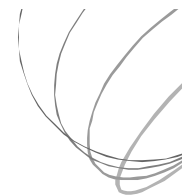


43. The Service Planning Handbook and Unit Planning Guidance were updated in late 2005 to promote a consistent approach to service planning and reporting across the FRA. These were supported by 'face to face' training sessions. Each service area prepares a quarterly audit report which draws together all the activity, performance and work of that service and reports progress against objectives in the *Service Improvement Plan*, performance against Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) and Local Performance Indicators (LPIs).
44. SPIs are set out in the Accounts Commission's annual *Direction* and are reported by all Scottish FRAs. LPIs are agreed by CFOA(S) to allow Scottish FRAs to benchmark their performance against each other. These indicators measure performance in areas such as fire prevention, the diversity of the workforce, attacks on firefighters and responsiveness to Freedom of Information requests. A new suite of LPIs was introduced on 1 April 2006.
45. The FRA has two main performance management systems, the Unit Plan Workbooks and the Initiative System, which operate in parallel, both down to station level.
46. In the Unit Plans, Service Delivery Managers in individual stations are responsible for routine performance monitoring. For each station watch, performance is reported against a set of measures in areas such as operational risk assessment, service planning and absence management on a four-point scale (high standard, satisfactory, below expected standard, unsatisfactory). The system is based on Microsoft Outlook and allows the streamlined collation of management information which helps to identify areas of under-performance.
47. The separate Initiative System, based on the performance approach in use at West Lothian Council, collates information on all the separate initiatives undertaken by the FRA, both those connected with the SIP implementation and other local initiatives. All managers, including those on stations, use the Initiative System to record and manage service planning objectives and local initiatives based in their own area's risk profile. The system provides a facility where all initiatives can be viewed across the organisation and has the potential to improve the sharing of information and good practice between different stations. The FRA is developing the Initiative System to strengthen performance management by using Microsoft Business Scorecard software to bolster linkages between strategic objectives and performance indicators. This should be completed by the end of the year 2006/07.
48. Both these systems have only recently been developed and are still bedding down, so their impact on building a culture of continuous improvement throughout the organisation has yet to be demonstrated. In addition, there is a lack of integration between the Unit Plans and the Initiative System, which can involve duplication of effort at middle management level.



49. The FRA has adopted a sound approach to project management and is using the PRINCE2³ methodology to handle the implementation of the SIP. The Director of Corporate Services is the Project Executive and the Project Board has overall responsibility for implementing the SIP. The Project Board meets every four weeks and reports to the Corporate Group. Progress reports are to be provided to the Board every six months, but it is too soon to gauge the effectiveness of SIP project management. There is considerable overlap of membership between the Corporate Group and of the Project Board, and while the responsibilities of both groups are clearly defined, there is a risk of overlap and duplication of discussion which the FRA needs to manage to ensure both groups are functioning effectively.
50. There is no staff appraisal system linking the FRA's corporate objectives and the performance management framework to objective setting and performance appraisal for employees. This means that although staff have a good idea of how their work feeds into station or functional plans, it is difficult for managers to set staff targets and to monitor their performance against these.
51. Corporate risk management is well developed by the FRA. Principles of risk management and identified corporate risks are on the Intranet, and the FRA has undertaken a number of risk management workshops. A corporate risk register based on the Service Plan was established in 2005. All Service Plan objectives are subject to a risk assessment process using a balanced scorecard approach. A Disaster Recovery Plan was approved by the Board in 2004. The Service Continuity Plan is established, and was tested in 'rehearsal' in 2005.
52. Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA), the FRA has contributed to a community risk register for the Lothian and Borders area, published in April 2006, which identifies a wide range of potentially disruptive events and emergencies that responder agencies may be involved in dealing with. The FRA also coordinates the continuing maintenance of the register to ensure it remains current and reliable.

³ Projects in Controlled Environments



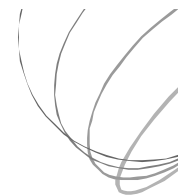
Part 2: Fire prevention and risk management

Key findings

- Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) is mainstreamed into corporate and service planning. Considerable use has been made of the computerised Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) model to inform risk management planning and the location, resourcing and activity of fire stations. However, long-term continuity of FSEC expertise is a risk.
- The FRA has made significant progress on Home Fire Safety Visits and is delivering a range of other community fire safety initiatives. However, there is scope for more effective targeting of these activities and evaluation of the impact of existing initiatives to ensure best use is being made of available resources.
- Partnership working at a local level is extensive and well developed but the FRA has no partnership register and lacks a strategic approach to managing its partnership work and information on how it contributes to its strategic objectives.

Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP)

53. The FRA has mainstreamed Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) into service planning processes, and strategic priorities are based on robust evidence using the Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) computer system.
54. The FRA makes considerable use of the computerised FSEC model to inform risk management planning. There is a large amount of data in FSEC and the FRA is able to add operational data to give next-day updates to risk assessments. For example, in West Lothian, five fires in the one neighbourhood recently required a large-scale response. Incident data—including appliance travel times, routes and activity—were logged in a database at the local station and ported electronically to HQ the following day. A profile of the incident could quickly be compared with data on previous CFS home safety visits to identify scope for further, closely targeted preventative community fire safety (CFS) work in that area. FSEC also uses data from other agencies, like the police and council departments such as housing and social services. The FRA reciprocates by providing data on incidents such as secondary fires, and has access to police crime analysts who can support investigations by the FRA.
55. However, the FRA needs to consider the long-term resourcing of the FSEC team and its data management capacity in general. The FSEC team consists of two full-time and one part-time member

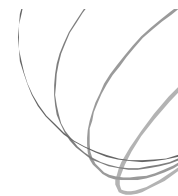


of staff and resilience of resources to continue the FRA's FSEC work is a potential risk, due to the specialised nature of these roles. Moreover, there is no dedicated statistician although the FRA has plans to recruit one, which should enable more sophisticated use to be made of this considerable information resource.

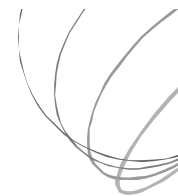
56. The FRA has used FSEC to generate incident and risk profiles for specific areas. The FRA also uses the Terian software system, but while this is powerful it is cumbersome to extract data from. An access database provides simple graphs of quarterly results of Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs), with information passed down to station level.

Implementation of IRMP

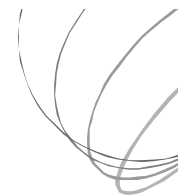
57. The FRA published its first IRMP in 2004 and its second in January 2005, ahead of the Scottish timetable, which required each FRA to have an IRMP in place from 1 April 2005. The IRMP has yielded some tangible benefits in what the FRA considers to be an evolutionary journey. For example:
- A review of the location, resourcing and activity of stations, leading to a phased programme of change, informed by FSEC.
 - A review of ridership levels freed up 16 posts for CFS activities, and improved efficiency of operational delivery led to 12 posts being transferred from operational response roles to fire investigation duties. These changes have contributed to overall efficiency savings of £2.6 million (primarily relating to redeployment of staff, rather than cashable savings).
 - The introduction of an Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) attendance policy has freed up operational time to deliver community fire safety and related activities.
 - Composite wholetime/retained crewing has been approved for implementation in a phased approach at four stations: Livingston, Duns, Penicuik, and Whitburn. Wholetime crews will staff these stations during the day and retained crews deployed at night and weekends.
 - Between February and July 2004, the FRA successfully trialled the use of operational response crews to deliver fire safety messages directly into an area of West Lothian with a high number of incidents and casualties. The pilot shaped the roll-out of the comprehensive home safety check programme across the FRA's area.
 - There has been a rationalisation of posts at a senior level to ensure a greater integration between the different service delivery functions, in particular operations and community safety.
58. Longer term plans in the SIP identify stations to be closed at Melrose, Tranent, and Marionville. Musselburgh station is being relocated to Wallyford and MacDonald Road is to be closed and replaced by two new stations at North Leith (one pump) and a satellite station (with a combi-appliance).



59. The FRA has made notable progress in delivering home fire safety visits (HFSVs), and received a COSLA award for this work. A total of 72,000 households were contacted in 2005/06, covering 17.8% of all households in the area, and over 120,000 HFSVs have been carried out by the FRA since the programme was initiated in 2004. All operational staff are involved in HFSVs. Stations are tasked with undertaking a target number of hours a week on HFSVs, with wholetime watches required to spend four hours per shift per appliance and retained watches three hours per month. Stations have been given risk maps to assist the targeting of HFSVs and the FRA is planning to supplement these with further information and evidence to show where staff need to concentrate their efforts, and revisit homes where appropriate. Referrals are also encouraged through leaflet drops, presentations to local groups and the FRA's freephone number.
60. Operational staff are expected to visit systematically all the properties in specific high and medium risk neighbourhoods identified in risk maps. Although the FRA piloted the HFSV programme in West Lothian and undertook training prior to rolling out the programme, a significant challenge remains in building a commitment among some staff for this type of work, in particular wholetime staff.
61. Many operational staff consider that more training is required, and some employees feel vulnerable in particular areas. The FRA should consider reviewing training requirements and providing further support to ensure the work is done effectively. In addition, there is scope for the FRA to work more closely in partnership with other agencies in identifying and working with the most vulnerable communities to reduce the incidence of domestic fires.
62. Much of the FRA's other CFS work is targeted towards young people with the intention of reducing the incidence of wilful fire raising and anti-social behaviour, which can result in fire risks to local communities. For example:
- the Phoenix Programme is aimed at promoting fire and community safety as well as contributing to the development of young people into responsible adults.
 - Cooldown Crew aims to discourage young people who are becoming involved in fire-play/fire setting behaviour and help them and their families understand the dangers of such behaviour and its consequences whilst improving their self esteem.
63. The FRA also delivers a fire safety education programme to targeted primary schools throughout the Lothian and Borders area, with support from a seconded school teacher. Members of the FRA's education team spend a week in a school, covering home fire safety, wilful fire raising and hoax calling on three levels pitched at P1-2, P3-4 and P5-6 pupils. The programme is supported by a visit from local firefighters and an opportunity for pupils to learn about the workings of a modern fire engine. The FRA is currently developing plans to extend the programme to include a larger section of the school community.

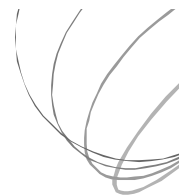


64. The FRA does not systematically evaluate the impact of its community safety work, although there is evaluation of some individual initiatives. In particular the West Lothian Community Safety Partnership is undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of the Cooldown Crew initiative in that area. There is also scope for greater sharing of good practice, both within the authority and with other agencies, and more effective targeting of activities towards those most at risk, so the FRA can demonstrate it deploys resources to best effect.
65. A systematic approach to evaluation is of particular importance as the FRA cannot yet demonstrate that its community safety work is delivering a sustained improvement in levels of fire risk. While the trend over the last few years is down, between 2004/05 and 2005/06 the number of accidental dwelling fires increased by 4%, the number of incidents resulting in casualties increased by 7% and the number of secondary fires increased by 18%.
66. The continuity of community safety work is jeopardised by short-term funding. Much of FRA's community fire safety work, including HFSVs, is currently funded by short-term grants and financial support from community planning partners. However, these funds are often short-term which impacts on long-range planning, and can mean that initiatives and marketing can only be planned on an annual basis. The FRA will need to ensure funding for community fire safety can be sustained in the long term if the current level of activity is to be sustained. The FRA is aware of these issues and has built some corresponding resilience into its budgeting process.
67. In October 2006, Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act brought in new responsibilities and workloads relating to fire risk. The new legislation puts a statutory responsibility for ensuring the safety of people in their workplaces or other non-domestic premises (such as residential care homes or houses in multiple occupation) in the event of a fire to the owners or managers of relevant properties. Fire and rescue authorities are responsible for enforcing the new legislation and ensuring owners are adequately fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. This has implications both in knowing which premises within their area are subject to new legislation and in establishing a new inspection framework.
68. One of the challenges has been accurately to forecast the workload implications, as the FRA will have new responsibilities for a significant number of additional premises. The FRA is still considering its approach to this workload. The authority has seconded an officer to the City of Edinburgh Council unit dealing with Houses of Multiple Occupation, to promote fire safety practices in these high risk premises. The FRA recognises that there will be staffing implications in meeting these new statutory duties and is considering a range of options.

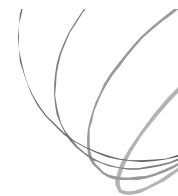


Effectiveness of partnership working

69. There is a considerable amount of partnership working at a local level within the FRA and a number of successful joint community safety initiatives. An Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) is the FRA's strategic partnership coordinator, and attends all partnership groups at a strategic level. However, the FRA lacks a partnership register, there is no strategic approach to partnership working, and the FRA cannot demonstrate whether the resources involved with partnership working are being used effectively to achieve its strategic objectives.
70. The FRA is represented on the five Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) in their area, although there are concerns about the effectiveness of some of the CPPs and, consequently, the FRA's contribution to the partnership. However, the FRA is an active participant in all the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), which are linked to the community planning framework. The different CSPs have different priorities and different ways of working, and it is a challenge for the FRA to ensure these local priorities are incorporated into their own service planning. For example, the Edinburgh CSP has a target of reducing the number of accidental dwelling fires by 6% and the number of deliberate secondary fires by 12% by 2008, but this target is not reflected in the FRA's current service planning documents.
71. The FRA is an active participant in data sharing initiatives with other partners in the region. Sharing information is an important element of community safety work across all CSPs, to inform community safety audits and promote the targeting of resources to high risk areas. For example, the FRA contributes information on location and numbers of different types of incidents, which when combined with information from other partners, such as crime figures from the police, enables detailed profiles of individual neighbourhoods to be developed.
72. However, while partner organisations generally view the FRA as a positive partner in local partnerships, frequent staff turnover of FRA representatives on some partnerships can be detrimental to communication and continuity.
73. The FRA has created opportunities to work in partnership and share premises with other services. For example, the Tweeddale Mountain Rescue team uses premises at Hawick station as a base. Three Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) vehicles are permanently housed at MacDonald Road fire station in Edinburgh, and SAS staff are based there too. Ten fire stations are used by SAS tactical response units.
74. The FRA has also established links with the business community, in particular through the Lead Authority Partnership Scheme which is promoted by the Health and Safety Executive. The FRA provides corporate training on fire safety to organisations such as the Royal Bank of Scotland and Sainsbury's.



75. The Risk Factory, a jointly-funded centre at Chesser in Edinburgh, opened in autumn 2006 as a training centre for children and young persons. The centre covers a number of different safety themes including fire, 'stranger danger', drug awareness, etc. and provides an exciting and interactive environment for learning about community safety issues for groups and organisations.



Part 3: Financial management

Key findings

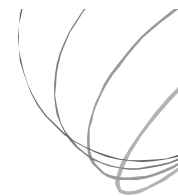
- The main financial pressures faced by the FRA are the end of transitional funding and the increasing cost of pension payments.
- The FRA's revenue budget-setting process is well-managed and operates within the overall corporate and service-level planning framework. A zero-based approach to budgeting has been adopted. Financial budgets are delegated down to service delivery managers and supported by sound budget monitoring procedures.
- A recent review of procurement has produced a revised procurement strategy, but this is still to be embedded within operational and business practices.
- Capital planning is well managed but there is no formal asset management plan in place. The development of this plan would allow the FRA to demonstrate best value in the use of the Board's assets and that spending plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

Financial position

76. The Board's net expenditure in 2005/06 was £45.8 million which equated to £51.03 per head of population, the second lowest figure among the eight FRAs and well below the Scottish average of £59.45. Net revenue expenditure was met by constituent authorities' contributions of £46.8 million. The FRA's surplus for the year was around £1 million compared to a budgeted surplus of £1.3 million.
77. It has consistently been the Board's approach that each of the constituent authorities' contribution to the FRA should match their GAE allocation. The FRA's budget for 2005/06 was borne by each constituent authorities in the following percentage shares:

%	Local authority
58.1	City of Edinburgh
15.9	West Lothian
15.2	Scottish Borders
6.2	East Lothian
4.6	Midlothian

78. Capital expenditure totalled £3.1 million and was predominantly funded by government grants. Expenditure was in line with the FRA's Capital Plan for 2005/06.
79. The level of external income generation by the FRA is minimal, amounting to 3% in 2005/06 (excluding employees' pension contributions). The FRA has sold capacity at its fire training centre and used grant income for community safety initiatives, derived from community planning partners.

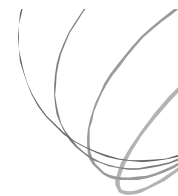


However, there is no strategy or financial procedures in relation to external funding, limited provision to compensate for the loss of fire certificate income, and while the legislation places restrictions on FRAs on the services for which they can charge, the FRA has not explored the extent to which further income could be generated in any systematic way.

80. Balances held at 31 March 2006 were in line with limits set in the Police and Fire Services (Finance) (Scotland) Act 2001 after Ministerial consent, and with the FRA's reserves strategy. The FRA holds a general fund which consists of both earmarked amount sets aside to support future years' expenditure and a contingency for unexpected events or emergencies. As at 31 March 2006, the FRA had reserves of £4.3 million, with £3.4 million set aside for cover particular commitments:
- £1.3 million to fund future payments of fire pension commuted sums, and
 - £2.1 million to fund the Service Improvement Plan, which includes £0.640 consent received from the Scottish Executive Ministers to exceed specific consent.

Financial pressures

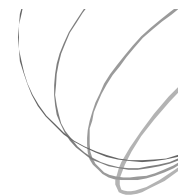
81. The main financial pressures for the FRA are the end of transitional funding and the rising costs of pension payments to retired firefighters. Other cost pressures identified by the FRA include the revenue implications of increased capital expenditure, costs associated with the ongoing development of IPDS and IRMP, and the impact of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005.
82. The Scottish Executive allocated the FRA £2.934 million of transitional funding for the financial period 2004/5 to 2007/08, to cover costs arising from the 2003 pay settlement. In common with other FRAs, this has not been treated as a separate funding stream but has instead been added to the overall resources available in setting annual budgets. Funding for wholetime firefighters has to be fully absorbed by the FRA by 2008/09 and the FRA plans to achieve this through the identification of efficiency savings for wholetime and retained firefighters.
83. The FRA continues to pursue a wide range of efficiency drives across several areas of operation, and for the 2006/07 budget identified £0.65 million cashable savings, primarily from reductions in expenditure for retained staff, as a result of reduced demand, and a reduction in establishment of 16 posts. Nevertheless, in 2007/08, the FRA forecasts the need to find £0.3 million for wholetime firefighter wage costs.
84. The FRA recently agreed to account separately for transitional funding and efficiency savings as an aid to close monitoring of whether efficiency savings will be sufficient to cover actual costs in 2007/08. It will be important for the FRA to distinguish between cashable and non-cashable savings, so that it can be sure efficiency drives will liberate enough savings to compensate for the end of transitional funding.



85. The two firefighters' pension schemes provided by the FRA are administered by the City of Edinburgh Council. They are unfunded and therefore have no assets to be valued. The cost of existing pensions is met from serving firefighters' contributions and contributions from constituent authorities through the revenue budget. At 31 March 2006 the present value of scheme liabilities was £290 million.
86. The rising cost of pensions risks undercutting the amount of funding available for service delivery because the FRA has to pay for both firefighters' pensions and the costs of running the FRA's operations out of its own revenue budget. This situation will worsen over the next few years as the large number of firefighters who joined the service in the late 1970's approach retirement. Firefighter pension liabilities are an increasing financial risk for all FRAs and the Scottish Executive is currently reviewing a number of different options for funding.
87. The FRA also confronts liabilities for support staff, whose pensions are provided under the Local Government Pension Scheme by the Lothian Pension Fund. The FRA's share of the Fund's net liabilities was £3.7 million at 31 March 2006, a slight improvement on the previous financial year's position, and a much lesser threat to the FRA than firefighter pensions.

Budget setting and monitoring

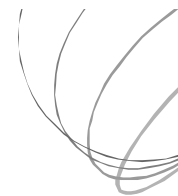
88. The FRA's overall approach is to zero-base its revenue budget each year, building up corporate budgets from service commitments. The budgetary framework is in line with the FRA's rolling Service Improvement Plan. Guidance for budget holders underpins the approach to budgeting. A draft budget submitted annually to each of the five constituent local authorities is accompanied by an explanatory briefing note.
89. While the FRA has adopted financial planning arrangements operating within the City of Edinburgh Council, these remain in draft as the FRA is currently changing its budgeting process to link in with initiative funding. New budget templates are currently being developed which will better link spending with service initiatives, allowing the FRA to improve linkages between corporate objectives and funding streams. At present, there is no real linkage between the budget and arrangements for IPDS, for example.
90. There are clear lines of accountability for financial matters. The Board gives authority to the CFO to incur all expenditure for which the Board has set a budget. The Board's standing orders provide guidance on the operation and limits in relation to tendering and are supplemented by detailed arrangements for defining authorisation levels for budget holders. Monthly monitoring reports by budget holders help promote prudent use of resources and complement higher-level monthly reports produced by the Treasurer for the Board.



91. Levels of financial delegation are specified in the Board's Scheme of Delegation. Each station commander is responsible for completing a Station Unit Plan, which includes a description of the financial and HR implications of local service delivery objectives.
92. Internal audit plays a key role in the FRA's governance arrangements, providing an independent appraisal service to management by reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the internal control system. The Board's internal audit service is provided by the City of Edinburgh Council under a service level agreement. The Chief Internal Auditor noted that '*a reasonable level of assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Board's internal control system in the year to 31 March 2006*'.
93. Recommendations made in previous years' internal audit reports are monitored by FRA management and internal audit, with progress regularly reported to the Scrutiny Committee. A report submitted to the Committee in August 2006 highlighted that all recommendations due for action had been implemented in respect of both internal audit and external audit recommendations.
94. Each year, external audit undertakes an overview of internal audit arrangements, which includes an assessment of whether reliance can be placed on work by internal audit. In their annual Report to Members on the 2005/06 audit, external audit commented that '*internal audit continues to be of a sufficiently high standard, though slippage in Internal Audit's work programme was noted*'.

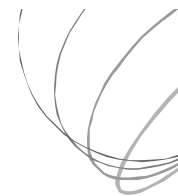
Procurement

95. The FRA agreed a revised procurement strategy in August 2006, which places a greater emphasis on Best Value than previous versions and describes the role of procurement in terms of 'the five Rs': to procure good and services of the Right quality, in the Right quantity, at the Right time, from the Right suppliers, and at the Right price. The FRA should focus on practical implementation at all levels, which may involve briefing and training for budget holders and other relevant staff. It is too soon to assess the impact of the revised strategy, although the FRA should ensure procedures are in place for this to be demonstrated over time.
96. The FRA is making good progress with the introduction of purchasing cards. A second-phase pilot initiative is in place, prior to formal rollout across the FRA. There are a number of important benefits to be gleaned from the introduction of the cards, such as the delivery of products within short timescales directly to stations without supplies being routed via the FRA HQ.
97. There is evidence of successful collaborative buying through organisations such as the Authorities Buying Consortium and the FRA is actively exploring further procurement routes through CFOA(S).



Capital planning and asset management

98. Net capital expenditure totalled £3.1 million in 2005/06. The three largest areas of capital spend in 2005/06 were property repairs (£1.2 million), appliances (£0.9 million), and equipment (£0.5 million). The capital balance on 31 March 2006 stood at £7.1 million.
99. A three-year rolling capital plan is financed primarily by capital grant from the Scottish Executive. The Service Improvement Plan's investment plan covering 2006/07 through 2008/9 requires capital expenditure of £7.3 million, including £2.9 million in 2006/07. Funding of the capital programme is contingent on capital grant by the Executive, the use of earmarked reserves and assumed levels of capital receipts.
100. The capital planning process requires functional managers to submit bids for capital expenditure for the following three years to the Capital Review Group. Bids are then aggregated and resolved corporately, to form proposals on an overall corporate capital plan for submission to the Board.
101. A Prudential Code published by CIPFA supports local authorities in taking their capital planning decisions and established prudential indicators that must be set by local authorities. The FRA has developed prudential indicators for the three-year periods of 2005 to 2008 and 2006 to 2009. Although the FRA does not currently use any prudential borrowing, and does not intend to do so until the effects of transitional funding ceasing are known, it may need to use this facility to realise its capital ambitions.
102. There is no formal asset management plan, so the FRA cannot demonstrate linkages between asset management and the Service Improvement Plan 2005-10. However, the FRA does have a three-year capital projection for replacement vehicles, which is approved by the Capital Review Group and covers fire appliances, special purpose emergency response vehicles, and other vehicles.
103. The FRA has recently purchased a 'fixed asset module' for its financial management system, and anticipates it will improve asset management and management of the three-year capital programme.



Part 4: Workforce management

Key findings

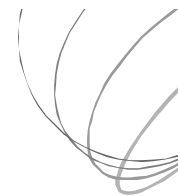
- The FRA has a clear understanding of the people and skills it requires to meet its strategic objectives. The Personnel Function operates within a well-managed business framework supported by detailed performance information. The annual Personnel Functional Plan identifies the priorities required to meet the Service Improvement Plan.
- The approach to the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) is robust, underpinned by a clear implementation plan and a well-resourced team. Training and development of wholetime staff is progressing well although the FRA needs to accelerate the roll out of PDRpro. The FRA also needs to ensure that the training needs of both retained and non-uniformed staff, who collectively encompass 38% of the workforce, are met effectively.
- The FRA has made good progress in introducing flexible working. There is an overarching policy on flexible working and options available to staff include job sharing, flexitime and compressed hours. Flexible working options are available to all staff.
- The current workforce does not reflect the diversity of the communities its serves, although the FRA is demonstrating a strong commitment to the equality and diversity agenda.

Workforce planning

104. The Personnel Function encompasses four functional areas —personnel (HR) management, staff management, equality and diversity, and health and safety. Training and Development is a separate function but as there are overlaps between the two functions, a Director of Personnel and Training oversees both departments. The FRA has committed to undertake a Best Value review of Support Services, which will include the Personnel and Training and Development functions, in 2008/09.

105. The Personnel Function operates within a clear business framework. The *Service Improvement Plan 2005-10* has significant implications for the FRA's personnel and training functions, and at the same time the FRA is implementing the changes required as a result of the new conditions of service introduced for uniformed staff in 2004 which are outlined in *Making Safer Communities: The New Contract*. These documents feed into the annual Personnel Functional Plan, linking it to the strategic direction of the FRA. The Functional Plan identifies the priorities of the Personnel Function and assigns actions to individuals against a timeframe that looks ahead as far as 2009. These documents together provide the medium- to long-term direction for the work of the Personnel Function.

106. The framework is complemented by good monitoring arrangements. The Personnel Function reports quarterly on its performance to the Corporate Group. The quarterly audit report includes the most

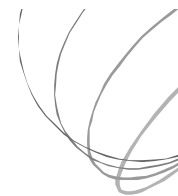


recent HR monitoring data (for example, sickness absence, reported injuries and the diversity of the workforce) as well as an 'initiatives update' which reviews on progress against actions in the Personnel Functional Plan. This regular reporting provides managers with an up-to-date picture of the workforce. The FRA is about to implement a new HR Management Information System (MIS), 'Sophtlogic', which is currently at the testing stage, and should improve the availability of management information and performance reporting.

107. The FRA has successfully strengthened its management of sickness absence. In March 2004 the Board approved a proposal to reduce sickness provision within the uniformed establishment from 8% to 6% over two years (2004/05 to 2005/06). To support this aim, the FRA introduced a sickness absence policy in April 2005, setting out the procedures for dealing with sickness absence, as well as occupational health and fitness arrangements. This active management of sickness absence has resulted in a decrease in the percentage of rider shifts lost due to sickness, from 6.6% in 2003/04 to 5.5% in 2005/06, which compares favourably with the Scottish average of 6.4% in 2005/06.

Support and development of staff

108. Training and development is effectively tailored to the needs of the organisation, making the FRA well placed to deliver IPDS. The Training & Development Function was restructured following a Best Value review in 2003/04, to accommodate the delivery of IPDS. The new organisational structure is built around three workstreams, development, assessment centres and training delivery, and the FRA has a dedicated IPDS team. In August 2004, an action plan for the implementation of IPDS was outlined in *Making Safer Communities: 'The Introduction of IPDS'*.
109. In line with this document, IPDS has been rolled out at Firefighter, Crew and Watch Manager level across wholetime stations. The FRA is behind schedule in the full rollout of PDRpro, which is the electronic system used to manage training records and personal development planning. While all wholetime stations have access to PDRPro, the FRA is experiencing technical difficulties which have affected the roll out to retained stations. These are currently being discussed with the supplier and once resolved the FRA will complete the roll out of PDRPro to all staff.
110. The provision of facilities for training and development of retained firefighters is less well advanced than for wholetime personnel. The pattern of station duties, which is limited to two hours per week, makes it hard for retained crews to find enough time for all for all the training they should undertake whether for conventional firefighting duties or new roles in delivering community safety. Whilst IPDS has been rolled out to retained personnel, progress in this area has been hindered by the absence of PDRPro. Overall however, the FRA needs to be mindful of the relative needs to these important staff groups who encompass 25% of the overall workforce.



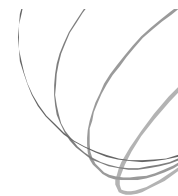
111. The FRA has successfully completed the transition from rank to role across wholetime, retained and control staff. The assimilation from rank to role was formally introduced in October 2005, and resulted in six appeals which have been resolved using a nationally agreed procedure.
112. The FRA also encourages the development of its staff through promoting further and higher education. Each layer of management is linked to an academic qualification, ranging from training certificates to Master degrees. To support staff in gaining the necessary qualifications, the FRA works with local higher and further education institutions to source courses, grants staff time off to attend courses or lectures, and contributes financially to course fees.
113. While provision for operational staff is developing well, there is no overall training strategy or development framework in place for non-uniformed staff. Interviews with non-uniformed staff identified that they feel encouraged and supported to undertake academic qualifications and other types of learning. However, they are required to identify their own training needs, as there is no appraisal system in place to highlight skills gaps or development needs. There is a need for a more structured approach to the training and development of non-uniformed staff, linked to a staff appraisal system which is connected to corporate objectives.

Flexible working

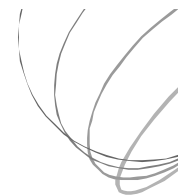
114. In June 2005 the FRA introduced an overarching policy on flexible working and a procedure for processing flexible working requests. The policy outlines the flexible working options available to staff, including job sharing, flexitime working, and compressed and staggered hours. The FRA has accommodated requests for flexible working, and interviews with staff confirmed that they are aware of the options available to them and do not perceive any difficulties with requesting to work flexibly.
115. Interviews with both uniformed and non-uniformed confirmed a general satisfaction with the current arrangements.

Equality and diversity

116. The FRA is demonstrating a strong commitment to diversity, fairness and equality in the workforce, articulated through the equality action plan, *'Leading from the Front'*. There is a dedicated team of two members of staff, whose work supports the delivery of the plan. An equal opportunities working group is in place, which includes members from the Corporate Group and representative bodies.
117. There are clear monitoring arrangements in place. Equality and diversity issues are now a standing agenda item at bi-monthly meetings of the Corporate Group. This allows progress against the equality action plan to be formally monitored.



118. Work is continuing to ensure that responsibility for equalities is devolved to station level, so that line managers take more ownership of this agenda. To support this process, a written booklet is being produced, coupled with briefings and seminars. The key aim of this work is to modernise the culture within which staff operate.
119. There is a clear emphasis on training to support the equality and diversity agenda for FRA personnel. A Diversity Training team, comprising six staff who have undergone the IODA 'Training the Trainers' course, is responsible for cascading training to other staff. The FRA plans to increase the number of trainers to 11 by the end of 2006. In addition to those people intending to become trainers, the FRA has sent 15 managers on the IODA training course to provide a greater awareness of equality and diversity issues within the FRA and support the wider implementation of the equality agenda.
120. The FRA is meeting its statutory obligations in relation to equality and diversity. A revised Race Equality Scheme 2006-2009 (RES) was approved by the Board in November 2005. In accordance with the RES, the FRA undertakes ethnic monitoring of employees, within quarterly reports by the Personnel Function. The FRA is also undertaking Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) on policies. Functional managers have had training on EIAs and are assessing all new policies and existing policies which are identified as high priority in the RES.
121. Policies on bullying and harassment are in place. Interviews with staff demonstrated that they were aware of the policies in place and felt they were fit for purpose. The FRA also has a First Contact team consisting of eight volunteers who have undergone relevant training and act as confidential contacts for staff subject to harassment or bullying. Information regarding the service, along with contact officers' name and contact details, are posted at all stations and workplaces.
122. Steps continue to be taken to address the diversity of the workforce. The FRA has held a number of Positive Action Recruitment Days, for women, minority ethnic groups, and Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) groups. These events are run each year prior to the FRA's annual recruitment drive. They are advertised through a variety of media and organisations. More work is required to monitor the effectiveness of positive action recruitment events and specific media advertising campaigns to ensure that they are having an impact and providing value for money. As future recruitment events are taking place through the South East Scotland Collaboration Group, this should bring economies of scale
123. Some operational staff perceive that positive action constitutes positive discrimination, and that individuals attending positive action recruitment events are given an unfair advantage in the recruitment process. Although the Corporate Group endorsed a statement September 2004 outlining the FRA's commitment to positive action and stating that the FRA would not endorse any forms of discrimination, more needs to be done to communicate the distinction between positive action and discrimination to staff, and to evidence that positive action makes a valuable contribution to



recruitment. It would benefit the FRA to undertake further communication with staff explaining the rationale for such events, perhaps attached to the ongoing programme of equality and diversity training across the FRA. It might also be helpful for the FRA to encourage more personnel to volunteer to assist with such events as this may help change their perceptions.

124. Despite this sound approach to diversity, the workforce does not reflect the diversity of the community it serves. Although 22% of Scotland's minority ethnic residents live in Lothian and Borders, representing just under 5% of its population, minority ethnic employees only represent 1% of the FRA workforce. The FRA has a high proportion of female employees (15%) compared to other FRA's in Scotland but women are not yet well represented in uniformed positions, where only 4% of wholetime and retained firefighters are female. The FRA needs to continue to focus its efforts in this important area.



Part 5: Management of operational business

Key findings

- The FRA has developed and implemented a range of policies to enable greater flexibility and more efficient use of resources, for example in relation to pre-arranged overtime, mixed crewing and changes in duty systems.
- Monitoring progress or performance against objectives in the Service Improvement Plan and annual Service Plan is difficult, as there are no clear targets or timescales assigned to them.
- Health and safety is well managed and organised, and the FRA is proactively addressing the challenges associated with attacks on firefighters.
- The FRA is actively involved in collaborative initiatives, in particular through the South East Scotland Collaboration Group.

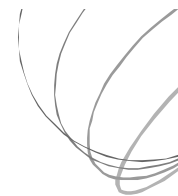
Operational management

125. The FRA is committed to providing and enhancing the delivery of a high quality intervention service, and has a corporate aim of providing an efficient and effective response to fires and other emergencies. Objectives linked to this aim for 2006/07 include:

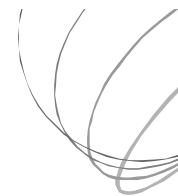
- Reviewing current management arrangements for specialist rescue teams.
- Monitoring, reviewing and, where necessary, improving the availability of fire appliances crewed by retained firefighters.
- Enhancing levels of communication / consultation to facilitate continuous improvement at service delivery level.
- Researching and specifying water / safety rescue craft to complement operational water safety procedures.

126. The SIP and annual Service Plan set out objectives for the FRA, in terms of operations. All objectives have been entered on to the Initiative System and are monitored through regular reports to the SIP Project Board.

127. The Service Plan reports figures on attendance times, call handling, operational activity and attacks on firefighters, and Senior Management receive daily print outs of incident attendance, attendance time failures, false alarms, staffing levels and the number of hoax calls received.



128. In developing the Service Improvement Plan (SIP), the FRA has maintained a focus on the intervention role it plays and has used the opportunity presented by the modernisation agenda to enhance and develop the rescue and investigation side of its service provision. The SIP outlines the range of incidents the FRA will respond to and the standards it will apply when responding to them. These incidents include structural collapse, rescue from height and water, and persons trapped. The SIP also outlines an aim to enhance the fire investigation service, and the FRA has completed this by training a specialised Fire Investigation team and expanding their skills to enable them to support Hazardous Materials Officers at incidents.
129. The FRA has a range of policies which give local operational managers flexibility to manage staffing requirements at their station, and have led to more efficient use of resources. They include policies on pre-arranged overtime, wholetime and retained contracts, and mixed wholetime/retained crewing. In addition, the FRA has introduced a revised flexible duty system and plans to introduce composite crewing arrangements at four of its stations (Duns, Penicuik, Whitburn and Livingston). This will involve wholetime staff providing cover during weekdays, and retained staff covering nights and weekends. These flexible working arrangements have enabled the FRA to redeploy 12 uniformed staff to community fire safety roles.
130. In early 2005, the FRA piloted a reduced attendance to AFAs for three months in West Lothian. Due to the success of this pilot the FRA introduced a policy of reduced attendance to calls received as a result of AFAs, on 1 June 2005. In the first six months of the policy there were 7,000 reduced appliance movements, and during 2006, there were 6,861 AFA calls where response was limited to only one appliance. This has freed up the equivalent of eight personnel for redeployment to community safety, and released 25,000 hours for operational firefighters to undertake other activities, such as training or community fire safety.
131. As part of the aim to reduce attendance at AFAs, the FRA is also focused on reducing the actual number of call outs. It is doing this by liaising with the managers of the top 20 AFA offenders, which are monitored with unique reference numbers. This has started to have an impact, as false alarms as a result of faulty apparatus decreased from 9257 in 2004/05 to 8670 in 2005/06 (-6.3%).
132. Although the national standards of fire cover were removed in 2005, the FRA has maintained the same targets for monitoring attendance times to emergency incidents. Performance against these targets is monitored and reported publicly in the annual Service Plan. Lothian and Borders is the only Scottish FRA still using these targets to manage its operational response, as the national standards were removed in favour of locally determined response standards based on a FRA's IRMP. The FRA is currently recording actual response times in FSEC to provide evidence for a future review of response times, although it does not plan to change its fundamental approach for another four years.



133. In May 2006 Lothian and Borders became the first Scottish FRA to receive the 'Health at Work Gold Award' (SHAW) for its commitment to improving the health of the workforce, demonstrating its commitment to health and safety in the workplace. Performance on health and safety issues is reported through quarterly personnel function audits which include figures on workplace injuries to employees, the number of staff on restricted duties, and progress against ongoing health and safety objectives. Progress reports on individual service improvement plans for specific services also cover health and safety issues. The total number of reported injuries reduced by 25% between 2004/05 and 2005/06, from 216 to 162, suggesting the FRA's approach is having a positive impact.

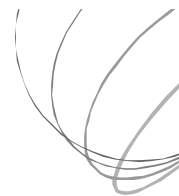
134. A major challenge for the FRA is responding to the level of attacks on firefighters. Attacks rose from 49 in 2004/05 to 83 in 2005/06, representing a 69% increase. The FRA is clearly aware of this issue and has put in place a number of initiatives to address it, such as the installation of CCTV cameras on appliances at Livingston, Sighthill and Newcraighall, and the Newcraighall Initiative. This initiative is a partnership approach aimed at reducing the number of attacks on firefighters. Working with partners such as Lothian and Borders Police and the environmental and housing departments of the council, partners have undertaken initiatives to engage the community, in particular youth, with the aim of reducing the number of attacks. Police data on incidents at which firefighters have been attacked is captured in FSEC, and data on firefighter attacks features in quarterly reports by Operations. This enables the FRA to monitor the number of incidents and where they are occurring.

Collaborative working

135. The FRA is actively engaged in collaborative working, but could benefit from taking stock of the relative costs and benefits of this engagement and its contribution to achieving corporate objectives.

136. The FRA works through the South East Scotland Collaboration Group (SECG) of four services — Lothian and Borders, Central, Dumfries & Galloway and Fife. The SECG is in the early stages of developing policies and procedures which each FRA can contribute to, and share, to yield more benefits than if each FRA worked separately. The FRA acknowledges the need to assess the impact and cost-effectiveness of its time investment in the SECG, but considers it is contributing to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Scottish fire and rescue service. Working groups have now been established to review and examine the arrangements for the following areas:

- Driver training provision
- Health and safety audit and support arrangements
- Specialist personnel / HR support
- Specialist training delivery
- Staff development

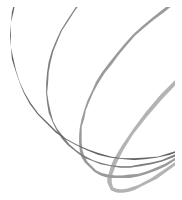


- Procurement

137. The FRA also works collaboratively with Scottish Water and local councils to ensure adequate water supplies remain available and accessible for emergency use. The FRA is participating in an efficient government bid in collaboration with a number of local authorities across Scotland to create a Centre of Procurement Excellence.

138. Other collaborations address:

- Continuous improvements to operational intervention - through CFOA(S).
- Civil contingency planning —through participation as a Category One responder in the Strategic Co-ordination Group covering the Lothian and Borders area.
- RTCs —the FRA is working with Fife FRA to look at accident prevention.
- Occupational Health —the service is shared with Central and Fife FRAs and there is also a shared contract regarding post-traumatic stress with the Royal Edinburgh Hospital.
- Firefighting at sea —collaboration with Strathclyde FRA.



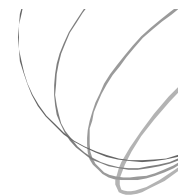
Part 6: Communications

Key findings

- There is no overarching internal communications strategy. The FRA has sought to improve internal communications in recent years but there is an inconsistency of approach between uniformed and non-uniformed staff.
- Communications and engagement with local communities is working well. The FRA has consulted extensively with external stakeholders on the changes facing the service. There are good arrangements in place for managing the media. The FRA needs to build on its existing approach to Public Performance Reporting (PPR) to deliver clearer and more accessible reports on performance.
- The FRA has a well managed approach to IT. All staff have access to IT facilities; however more training is required to support the introduction of IT across the service. The FRA makes good use of its intranet to drive forward service improvements.

Internal communication

139. Overall responsibility for communications sits with Central Services. The Corporate Communications Function is responsible for managing all internal and external communication. It also provides advice and support on specific issues through the service delivery structure; for example, advising the Health and Safety Function on communication relating to the Scotland Health At Work (SHAW) Scheme.
140. There is no overarching internal communications strategy in place. The FRA uses a variety of techniques to communicate with staff, including 'The Message' newsletter which is distributed monthly. There is a perception amongst staff that 'The Message' is primarily a vehicle for 'management messages', although there is little enthusiasm from staff to contribute to the content of this newsletter to counteract this.
141. The FRA has sought to improve internal communications in recent years. For example, last year the FRA embarked on a face-to-face communication initiative and launched staff seminars for operational staff—annual for wholetime firefighters and every two years for retained staff, with crew and watch managers more frequently. These seminars have increased the level of face-to-face communication with operational staff, but our interviews indicated that they feel the seminars did not provide a forum for two way communication with management. The FRA also carried out a communications audit in 2005, but this was largely targeted at crew and watch managers. There are no formal plans in place to take the results of this audit forward. This is missed opportunity for the FRA to drive forward service improvements in this important area.



142. Communication with non-uniformed staff is less well structured than with operational staff. While staff seminars are held for operational staff, there is no such formal arrangement for non-uniformed staff, although staff meetings are held when there are particular issues to discuss, such as Single Status. In our interviews, non-uniformed staff tended to feel generally that the FRA does not fully engage with them or encourage two-way communication. The FRA may benefit from the establishment of a cross functional working group, bringing together a range of staff to examine communications mechanisms and assess the effectiveness of various techniques, which has proved successful in other FRAs.

External communication

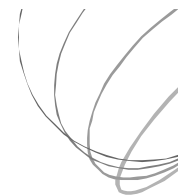
143. Communication and engagement with local communities is working well. The FRA has placed significant emphasis on external communication. This has been driven by the SIP, which has required some challenging decisions (for example, station closures) to be communicated to stakeholders and local communities.

144. The FRA consulted extensively on the SIP using a variety of methods including newspaper advertisements, the internet, leaflets distributed to public establishments such as libraries and GP surgeries, and public meetings. The FRA also ensured that constituent councils were fully informed of the proposed changes. For example, the FRA held a briefing in West Lothian for the Chief Executive of the Council, Fire Board members and the Leader of the Council, to explain the changes resulting from the SIP and asking for comments. The results of the consultation process were included in a Consultation Analysis report, published in January 2006, which listed all the issues raised and the FRA 's response.

145. The FRA intends to use the Citizen's Panels which exist in Edinburgh and Midlothian to identify issues for the FRA and assess the effect of Home Fire Safety Visits. However, there is potential for the FRA to work more proactively with its community planning partners to develop a co-ordinated and cost-effective approach to consultation and share good practice in community engagement, in particular around the use of the National Standards for Community Engagement.

146. There are well developed arrangements in place for media relations and the FRA clearly recognise the important role that the media can play in communicating the fire safety message. Six members of staff have been trained in media relations and there is a dedicated media officer on call 24 hours a day. In addition to fulfilling their day-to-day role, these 'media officers' are available to deal with media enquiries and media releases. Good relationships have been built with a range of local and national press, including the Edinburgh Evening News.

147. Section 13 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003, imposes a duty on local authorities, police and fire services to make arrangements for reporting on the public outcomes of their performance, known as public performance reporting (PPR). Each year the FRA produces a Service Brief, a leaflet

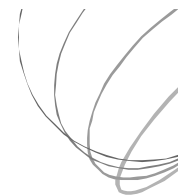


which gives headline figures on the performance of the FRA such as the number of fire casualties or time taken to respond to an emergency call. The Service Brief does not give a clear picture of the performance of the FRA. The annual Service Plan (published later in the year) provides more detail on the performance of the FRA compared to previous years, and sets out objectives for the year ahead. Whilst the Service Plan provides an overview of the performance of different departments, the links to the SIP are not always clear.

148. There is scope for the FRA to reconsider whether the contents of documents intended to inform the public on service performance are easy to understand, concise and have regard to Section 13 of the 2003 Act in relation to financial and performance information matters. The FRA would also benefit from developing a single PPR document to articulate its performance more clearly to the public. For example, it is difficult to track progress against some of the operational objectives from the published documentation.

Information technology

149. The FRA has a well managed approach to IT. The FRA has a robust IT Strategy which was approved in 2005 and sets out objectives for the development of the IT infrastructure until 2009. An IT review was completed by independent IT consultants in 2006. As a result the FRA is currently reviewing IT resources, including the employment of a temporary web development resource.
150. IT has been rolled out across the FRA with all staff now having an e-mail account and access to the internet and intranet. However, there is a lack of IT training to support this roll out. Some staff do not feel they have the necessary skills to access the IT system and the FRA is planning to recruit an IT trainer to address this.
151. The FRA makes good use of the intranet to drive forward service improvements. The 28 day file flags up any new policies or articles of interest added to the intranet, and stores them for 28 days so they are easily accessible by staff. Work is underway to make the intranet more up to date and relevant to staff. As part of this, Functional Managers have been given responsibility for updating departmental sections of the intranet.
152. Interviews with staff highlighted a feeling that there is an over reliance on IT for communication. The lack of IT expertise among some staff means that information sent out via email is not accessible to all. There is also a limit to the extent to which IT is used for training. For example, PDRpro has not been rolled out to all stations yet; IT training will need to accompany this roll out to ensure staff use the system to its full capability. The roll out of IT training will have a significant impact on the use of IT systems for communication and training.



Part 7: Improvement agenda

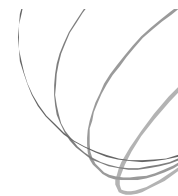
153. Scottish fire and rescue authorities are undergoing a major period of change, underpinned by new legislation and accompanying statutory guidance. Locally, elected members and FRA officers must focus on delivering more targeted and risk-based services, which should be driven by a desire to achieve the highest possible standards.
154. Continuous improvement in public services and local governance lies at the heart of the statutory Best Value and community planning policy framework. This requires a culture where areas in need of improvement are identified and openly discussed, and in which service performance is constructively challenged.
155. The improvement agenda below sets out a number of actions identified through the audit and is intended to assist the FRA focus on the areas where it should direct its initial efforts. These areas for improvement are designed to build on the momentum for change that already exists within the FRA and will provide the basis for review and monitoring by Audit Scotland in the Autumn of 2007.

Strategic management

- Consider introducing a training and development framework for elected members to ensure they are fully equipped to meet all the statutory duties under Best Value legislation (para. 38).
- Exploit the Initiative system to deliver improved sharing of good practice, and ensure there is integration between the initiative system and further developments in the performance management systems (paras. 47-48).
- Develop a personal appraisal system for staff which links to the strategic objectives of the service and existing performance management arrangements (para. 50).

Fire prevention and risk management

- Ensure continuity of resourcing for the FSEC team (para. 55).
- Ensure staff involved in delivering HFSVs are fully trained and supported (para. 61).
- Explore the potential of further partnership working to identify and work with the most vulnerable communities in delivering HFSVs (para. 61).
- Develop a systematic approach to improved targeting and evaluating the impact of community safety work to ensure optimum use of resources (para. 64).
- Ensure there is continuity of funding for community safety activities (para. 66).
- Develop suitable provision to meet the requirements of Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act (para. 68).



- Develop a partnership register and a strategic approach to managing partnership working to ensure resources are directed at those partnerships which deliver the greatest benefits (para. 69).

Financial management

- Consider whether further strategic work is required in relation income generation (within the confines of Fire (Scotland) Act 2005) (para.79).
- Implement the new budget templates to improve the links between spending and corporate objectives (para. 89).
- Fully implement the revised procurement strategy and ensure there are arrangements for assessing whether it is delivering value for money (para. 95).
- Develop a formal asset management strategy, linked to the Service Improvement Plan (para. 102).

Workforce management

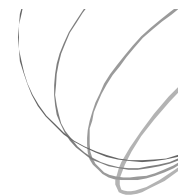
- Complete the roll out of PDRpro to retained stations once technical difficulties are resolved (para. 109).
- Ensure that the training needs of retained and non-uniformed staff are adequately met (paras. 110 and 113).
- Continue work on creating a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves, and evaluate the effectiveness of individual initiatives (paras. 122 and 124).

Management of operational business

- Continue to review attendance times, with a view to developing a locally determined set of targets in due course (para. 132).
- Continue initiatives aimed at reducing the number of attacks on firefighters (para. 134).

Communications

- Put in place an action plan, to take forward the issues identified in the recent communications audit (para. 141).
- Consider the establishment of a cross functional working group to examine communications mechanisms and assess the effectiveness of various techniques (para. 142).
- Build on the existing approach to PPR to deliver clearer and more accessible reports on FRA performance which meets the requirements of the legislation (para. 148).
- Ensure staff receive relevant levels of training and support to use the IT systems available (para. 150).



Appendix 1

Glossary

AFA	Automatic Fire Alarm
CFO	Chief Fire Officer
CFOA (S)	Chief Fire Officers Association in Scotland
CFS	Community Fire Safety
EIA	Equality Impact Assessment
FRA	Fire and Rescue Authority
FSEC	Fire Service Emergency Cover —software issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government to help FRAs carry out the risk mapping required for IRMP
GAE	Grant Aided Expenditure
HMFSIS	Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland
HFSV	Home Fire Safety Visit
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IPDS	Integrated Personal Development System
IRMP	Integrated Risk Management Planning
JCG	Joint Consultative Group
LAPS	Local Authority Partnership Scheme
MCA	Marine and Coastguard Agency
NJC	National Joint Council
PFP	Personnel Functional Plan
PPR	Public Performance Report(ing)
RTC	Road traffic collision
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound
SAS	Scottish Ambulance Service
SHAW	Scottish Health at Work
SPIs	Statutory Performance Indicators —statutory indicators set out in the Accounts Commission's annual Direction, under the Local Government Act 1992.
LPIs	Local Performance Indicators —a set of CFOA(S) indicators designed to allow Scottish FRAs to benchmark their performance against each other.
SMT	Senior Management Team