



# Three year strategic plan **2015/16 - 2017/18** Consultation document



**Our three year strategic plan highlights the key risks and challenges we face within County Durham and Darlington and how we intend to align our resources to those risks over the next three years**

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# Welcome to our three year strategic plan 2015/16 - 2017/18

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## Welcome and foreword

Welcome to the consultation document on our latest three year strategic plan which explains how we serve the people of County Durham and the Borough of Darlington, sets out the key risks and challenges we face and how we intend to allocate our resources to meet those risks.

Reductions in central government funding over the past four years have meant we have had to find over £3.5m of savings from our budget since 2010. Achieving these savings has meant making significant changes to how we deliver our service. However, so far, we have been able to do this without increasing risk in local communities.

Looking ahead, the next three years are likely to be even more challenging as we will need to find a further £3.6m of savings to meet the expected reductions in government funding. The options we have available to balance the budget for the fire and rescue service will be increasingly difficult to implement meaning we need to think differently about how we deliver services across County Durham and the Borough of Darlington.

Delivering on our vision of Safest People, Safest Places remains the focus of our work and the Authority has produced this plan to enable local people to see how their fire and rescue service will work with them, and with partner organisations, to ensure that local communities are safe despite the financial challenges.



**Susan Johnson**  
Chief Executive  
County Durham and Darlington  
Fire and Rescue Authority



**Councillor Michele Hodgson**  
Chair County Durham and  
Darlington Fire and Rescue  
Authority

**Safest People, Safest Places**

# Keeping communities safe

We employ 619 staff consisting of: 516 operational firefighters (348 full-time and 168 part-time on-call) 26 control room staff, and 77 support staff.

**We are located** in 15 fire stations, a service headquarters, training centre and a technical services centre.

**We work** a range of duty systems to ensure we have the right number of skilled firefighters available at the right time and place to respond to emergencies.

- **2-2-4 shift** - immediate 24 hour response using full-time firefighters.
- **Day-crewed** - immediate daytime response using full-time firefighters Monday to Friday with an on-call response using part-time firefighters at night and weekends.
- **Day-crewing plus** - immediate daytime response with full-time firefighters on-call from accommodation next to the station at night.
- **Retained** - on-call part-time firefighters providing a response within five minutes.

**Our fleet** includes:

- 27 front-line fire engines
- 2 aerial ladder platforms
- 11 specialist vehicles
- 5 targeted response vehicles
- 9 four-wheel drive (4x4) vehicles.

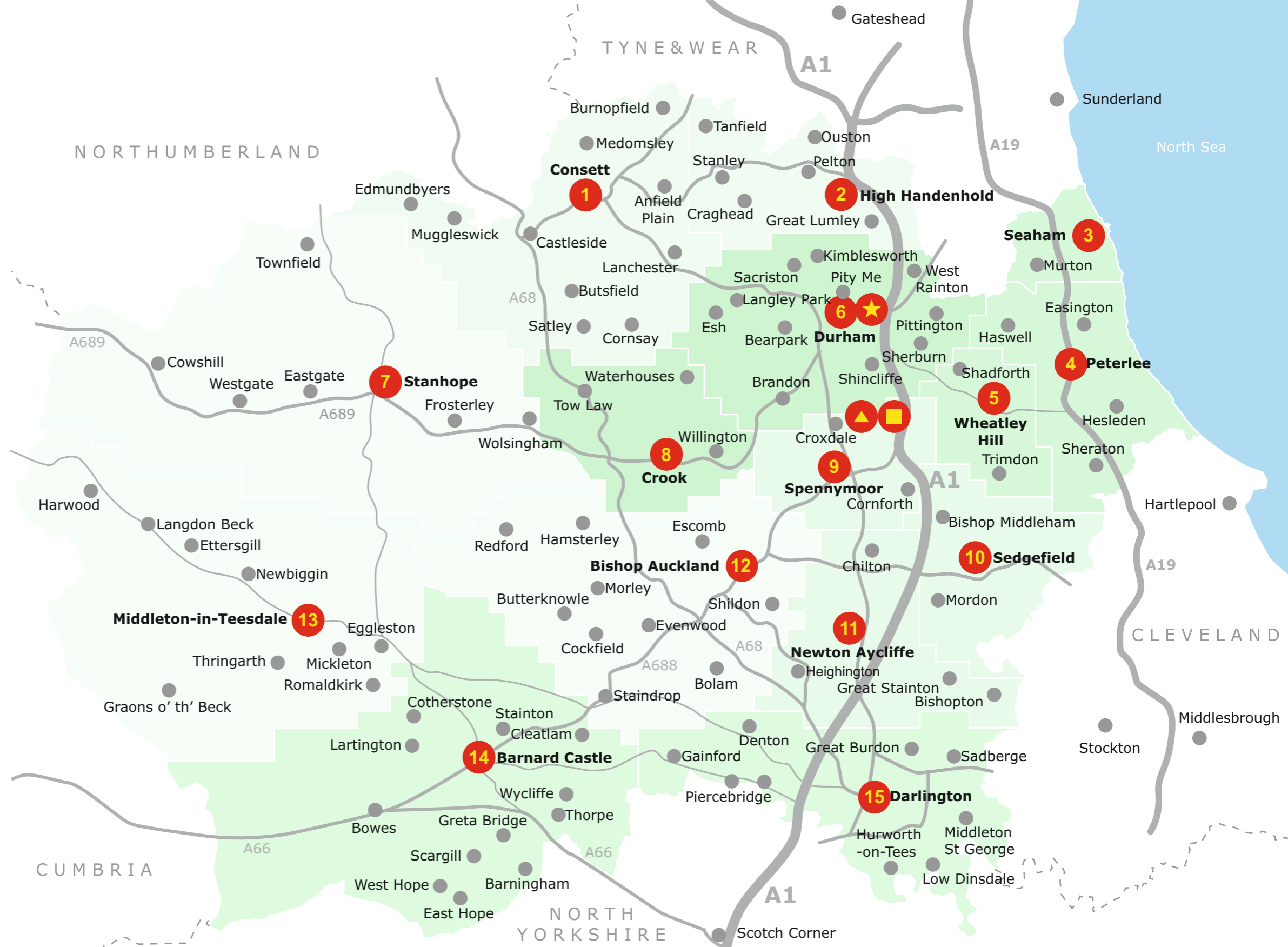
We work to **PREVENT** fires and other emergencies from occurring in the first place.

Our firefighters and other front-line staff undertake more than 18,000 home fire safety checks each year, carry out fire and road safety talks in schools and work with partner agencies to inform our communities about fire and road safety.

We work to **PROTECT** people when emergencies do happen.

Our firefighters and fire safety officers undertake inspections of workplaces providing advice and guidance to owners and occupiers, taking enforcement action where necessary.

We **RESPOND** to emergencies including fires, road traffic collisions, air and rail crashes, water rescues and flooding, hazardous chemical incidents and many other types of emergencies.



Our firefighters regularly train, maintain and test equipment to ensure they remain operationally ready to respond to emergencies at all times.

We also work closely with our partners such as Durham Constabulary, the North East Ambulance Service, local councils and our neighbouring fire and rescue services to ensure we can respond effectively and competently to any emergency.

- |                                  |   |                                       |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Consett Community Fire Station | 7 Stanhope Fire Station                   | 13 Middleton-in-Teesdale Fire Station |
| 2 High Handenhold Fire Station   | 8 Crook Fire Station                      | 14 Barnard Castle Fire Station        |
| 3 Seaham Fire Station            | 9 Spennymoor Community Fire Station       | 15 Darlington Community Fire Station  |
| 4 Peterlee Fire Station          | 10 Sedgefield Fire Station                | ★ HQ                                  |
| 5 Wheatley Hill Fire Station     | 11 Newton Aycliffe Fire Station           | ▲ Technical Services Centre           |
| 6 Durham Fire Station            | 12 Bishop Auckland Community Fire Station | ■ Training Centre (from 2015)         |

## Safest People, Safest Places

We provide an efficient and effective emergency response service



### Our priorities

Our staff are committed to making sure that people, businesses and organisations in County Durham and Darlington are protected by working towards our vision of: Safest People, Safest Places.

To help us achieve our vision we aim to:

- Protect people and properties and prevent incidents from happening;
- Invest in the people who work for us to ensure we get the best contribution from them;
- Continue to improve our service in a sustainable way that offers value for money.

More than 618,000 people live within our Service area of approximately 2,460 kilometres, with just under half of these people being in work. The population comprises approximately 51.1% females and 2.8% ethnic minorities; 19.9% are under 18 and 17.9% are over 65.

The area faces a number of challenges including poor health statistics, low life expectancies and low economic activity. Despite real improvements in recent years, educational attainment is below the national average. Many parts of the area also have housing stock that is sub-standard, falling below accepted decency levels.

Clearly these factors contribute significantly to the high levels of social deprivation observed in our area. According to national statistics, County Durham and Darlington has 12.8% of its ward areas in the top 10% most deprived; 29.8% in the top 20% most deprived; and 46.5% in the top 30% most deprived areas in the country.

These factors impact on the risk profile for County Durham and Darlington and by understanding our local area we can determine where we need to allocate resources in order to mitigate these risks.



The Authority is focussed on managing risks and ensuring that resources are allocated in the best way to reduce the number of emergency incidents and the associated risk of injury, death or loss in the local area. Our 15 fire stations, 27 front line fire engines and specialist equipment are strategically spread throughout the county and borough so that we can get to fires and other incidents as quickly as possible.

Our staff work across six districts and offer support to each other. We also have mutual aid agreements with neighbouring fire services so that we can assist each other if a major emergency occurs.

## **Identifying and assessing risks**

The Authority has a statutory duty under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to provide a safe and effective operational response to meet a wide range of incidents. We fulfil our responsibilities under other key legislation such as the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the Fire and Rescue Service (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

The Authority is also guided by the government's Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, published in 2012, which requires the Authority to identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks.

Our response to these risks could include: extinguishing fires, rescuing people at road traffic collisions or those who are trapped either at height or in confined spaces, dealing with building collapse, flooding and other related water incidents, dealing with chemical spillages and preventing damage to the environment.

The Authority also plays a full part in the National Resilience Programme, which prepares for and responds to national major emergencies and unexpected events such as natural disasters or terrorist incidents. The resources we maintain to support this programme include High Volume Pumps, Mass Decontamination Equipment and hazardous materials specialists who are trained to detect and identify toxic and harmful substances.

## Safest People, Safest Places



### The risks we face

Our local risk registers record details of the risks that we manage on a local basis and we have District Plans in place that determine our approach to prevention, protection and response in each locality.

There are a number of specific risks within the area that could significantly impact on local communities which are covered in the following sections:

### Risk of death, injury or loss from fire

A risk all of our communities face is that related to fire. Through our prevention, protection and response services we aim to mitigate this risk. The degree of risk varies depending on the local area and the individual people and lifestyles within that area.

#### Hoarding

In recent years the Service has seen a notable increase in the number of incidents involving hoarders including two separate dwelling fires involving fire fatalities. Hoarding can create significant risks to the individual, the community and firefighters. Hoarding large quantities of materials, which may be combustible, increases the risk and severity of fire and makes it harder to escape should a fire occur. It is also much more difficult for firefighters to locate people trapped in a fire and emergency responders risk being trapped by falling debris.

### Risk of death or injury from road traffic collisions

We have a number of major road networks running through our area and this presents a risk of road traffic collisions occurring. Collisions also frequently occur on the many rural roads that exist across County Durham and the Borough of Darlington. We need to ensure that we mitigate these risks through our prevention and response activities. Large scale transport related emergency incidents require an effective coordinated response; therefore, we have joint protocols in place with partner agencies such as the police, ambulance service and local authorities to deal with any foreseeable major transport incident.



## Risk of extreme weather

An increasing risk relates to extreme weather; this includes the risk of death, injury or loss from flooding. In recent years the number of significant flooding events has increased. We have a number of areas within County Durham and Darlington that have been subject to severe localised flooding and in the past year we deployed some of our national resilience assets to deal with major flooding in the south of the country.

## Risk of terrorist activity

Events over the last few years, both at home and abroad, have increased the risk of terrorist activity impacting on our society. The Fire and Rescue Service plays a major role in protecting the community in the event of such an incident and along with the other blue light services contributes significantly to the planning and training for such events.

## Industrial incidents

Emergency incidents at industrial premises pose a specific risk at individual sites and a wider risk to local communities depending on the type of event. We provide fire safety advice to local businesses as part of our protection services and we are equipped and trained to respond to incidents that do occur.





## Safest People, Safest Places

### Risks in specific areas

We are aware that there are different risks specific to certain parts of our area. We manage these risks through our district structure and local risk plans, which enable us to target our resources based on local knowledge and intelligence.

#### **Wear and Tees district**

(Bishop Auckland, Stanhope and Middleton in Teesdale fire stations)

The Wear and Tees district area is located in the heart of our area. There is a mix of industrial, commercial, residential and rural areas that represent a varied range of risks that need to be managed effectively. This includes a number of large industrial estates, water risks relating specifically to Stanhope and Middleton, a number of busy 'A' roads and a number of large social housing estates that do not meet modern standards.

#### **Derwentside district**

(Consett and High Handenhold fire stations)

The specific risks identified within the Derwentside district area relate to a significant level of social deprivation. The area around Consett has seen a large increase in the number of new homes built and supporting amenities giving the area a varied risk profile. The area also includes the largest open air museum in Europe at Beamish. Local industry consists of traditional light engineering and more modern service industry sites.

#### **Darlington district (Darlington and Barnard Castle fire stations)**

Darlington is a large market town with a population of approximately 105,000 residents. The Darlington area comprises large scale industrial, commercial and residential areas resulting in a broad mix of risks. There are a large number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HiMO) and several large social housing estates. The A1M motorway runs through the Darlington area and the East-Coast mainline passes through the town serving a major rail station. Barnard Castle is predominantly rural with small scale residential areas, a hospital and a young offender's prison. Also located within the town is Bowes Museum, a major heritage site housing many important works of art. The town is also home to a large scale pharmaceutical production site.



## **Easington district** (Peterlee, Seaham and Wheatley Hill fire stations)

The Easington district includes concentrated areas of population with specific challenges with some of the highest levels of deprivation in the country. There are also a number of large industrial estates in Peterlee and Seaham with a broad mix of businesses from heavy manufacturing to modern service industry sites. The transport related risks arise from the railway line running through the area, the A19 road network and a number of busy rural roads; these all contribute to the diverse risks within the Easington District area.

## **Sedgefield district** (Newton Aycliffe, Spennymoor, Sedgefield fire stations)

There are significant industrial risks in this area, particularly in Newton Aycliffe, as well as a number of concentrated areas of population. The industrial estates located in Newton Aycliffe incorporate a number of large chemical, engineering and commercial sites. Communities are served by some of the county's busiest roads including the A1M and A167 with the East Coast railway line also running through the district area. A major factory is under construction in Newton Aycliffe that will produce high speed trains for the Great Western and East Coast lines.

## **Durham and Chester-le-Street district** (Durham and Crook fire stations)

The significant risks managed within this district are the World Heritage Site, which includes Durham Cathedral and Castle; the University of Durham and three hospitals. There are also three prisons within the area and new local industrial estates have been established consisting of modern retail and manufacturing facilities interspersed with more traditional industries. Water risks include the River Wear which runs through the district area and the centre of Durham City. The busy Durham railway station is an important link on the East Coast mainline. The city is also served by busy trunk roads such as the A167, A690 and A1M motorway, which all run through the district area.

# 18,000

## home fire safety checks carried out



### **Addressing the risks**

Our integrated approach to reducing risks and keeping local communities safe is focused around the prevention, protection and response arrangements we have in place.

### **Prevention**

Our prevention work is focused on developing and delivering educational interventions, targeted towards the most vulnerable people, to reduce fire deaths and injuries within the home. We use a range of information and data to identify the most vulnerable people and communities in our area.

Research shows that people are more at risk from fire if they:

- Are over 60 years of age;
- Live alone;
- Have mental health issues;
- Suffer mobility or hearing loss issues;
- Have alcohol or drug dependency;
- Smoke;
- Have a learning disability.

### **Improving safety in the home**

This year we will undertake approximately 18,000 home fire safety visits to households in County Durham and Darlington. We will deliver home fire safety visits and fit free smoke alarms to all households in our area but we actively target those people who are most at risk. We aim to deliver at least 70% of our visits to vulnerable people who are most at risk of fire.

We have increased the amount of time dedicated to prevention activities and significantly increased the number of home fire safety visits we undertake each year. However, it may become more difficult to sustain these levels should the reductions in government funding continue.

### **Hoarding**

To address the increasing incidence of fires involving hoarders, we work closely with other public safety agencies and housing providers to raise awareness of the issues. We share information and intelligence to minimise the risk to the hoarders and their families, their neighbours and firefighters. We have also raised awareness at a national level, influencing the creation of a national hoarder working group.



# A third of all people killed or seriously injured on the roads are aged 17 to 24



## Reducing road traffic collisions

A third of all people killed or seriously injured on the roads are aged 17 to 24. This is our highest risk age group and our work focuses on targeting road safety education and intervention at these young people. We work with young people through local schools, colleges and universities as well as visiting workplaces. The extra capacity we created by changing the shift systems for our firefighters has ensured that we can increase the work we do in this important area.

## Reducing deliberate fires

Deliberate fires account for a large proportion of the emergency incidents we attend. Our prevention strategy is focused on working with partners including the police, local authorities and other agencies to understand where the areas of greatest risk are and to work together to reduce the number of deliberate fires that occur. This approach allows us to share information, analyse data and investigate fire related crimes to ensure appropriate action is taken against offenders. We also deliver targeted educational activities to change the behaviours of those people who are likely to commit arson.

## Protecting young people

Our longer term prevention strategy is also focused on young people. The earlier we can begin educating young people in keeping themselves safe, the more chance there is of our community safety messages making a difference in the longer term. As positive role models, our professional firefighters and community safety staff can assist young people to make a positive contribution to society and improve their life skills.

We aim to visit every school in County Durham and Darlington each year to deliver a range of focused educational packages.

These visits are designed to ensure young people are more aware of their own responsibilities and help them to take steps to reduce their risk of injury or harm. We will also continue to work with some of our most disadvantaged young people through specific educational programmes.

## Safest People, Safest Places



### Protection

Protecting local communities and the businesses that provide economic prosperity in County Durham and Darlington is a key role for our Service. Our prevention work is aimed at keeping people safe and our protection work is focused on ensuring that commercial and industrial premises are safe places for people to work and visit. We have recently changed the way we provide our protection services and local firefighters are now heavily involved in working with businesses in their area. We have invested a significant amount of time and resource into delivering specialist training to these firefighters to ensure that we can increase the amount of protection work undertaken whilst protecting the number of frontline firefighting staff we have to respond to emergencies.

### Risk-based programme of safety inspections for local businesses

The type of premises inspected and the frequency that visits are carried out is determined by the level of risk a business poses to the occupiers and the community. Our risk based audit programme ensures that those premises most at risk of fire are prioritised by our protection activities. The changes we have made to shift systems have created additional capacity to enable our firefighters to carry out inspections of premises within their station area. Our dedicated fire safety officers focus on premises that are more complex and which represent a higher risk. This is the most appropriate use of the resources we have available and enables us to ensure we allocate resources according to risk.

### Business Engagement

We engage with local businesses through the established fire liaison groups and the North East Chamber of Commerce. We also work with enforcement agencies to share good practice to help reduce the burden of inspection on local businesses. This balanced approach allows us to meet our statutory responsibilities while helping local businesses ensure they do not face significant fire related risks.



# Emergency calls will be answered within 6 seconds

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## Response

We are fully committed to prevention and protection activities to keep our local communities safe and to ensure our local businesses provide safe working facilities for staff and customers. Our response strategy is designed to provide a resilient emergency response if an incident does occur. We believe we do this in the most efficient and effective way possible and many of the proposals we consulted on last year were designed to help us to achieve this.

## Response standards

The new crewing arrangements introduced at Newton Aycliffe and Seaham fire stations and the alterations to working patterns and routines at all other full-time fire stations have been very successful, made us more efficient, and helped us to deal with reduced funding without increasing response times and risk for communities.

## Command and Control

We provide a 24/7 emergency call handling and mobilising service which ensures we send the right vehicles, equipment and staff to emergencies promptly. We are in the process of implementing a new command and control system to provide us with state-of-the-art technology to ensure our control room service is as efficient and effective as possible. We are also trialing a new shift system for our control room staff, which will improve resilience and allow for additional work to be undertaken within the control room.

# 90%

of house fires attended within 11 minutes

## Performance

### Accountability to local communities

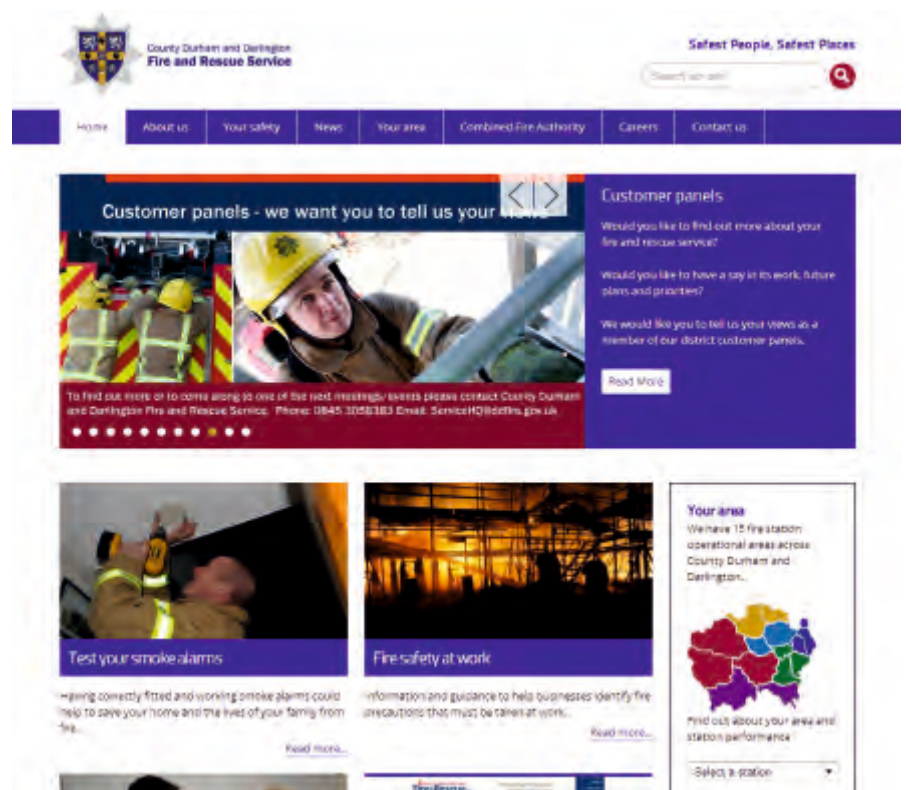
We are committed to sharing the information we hold in relation to risks facing local communities and businesses so that we can learn from the experiences of people who live and work in our area.

In order to ensure that the information we publish is accessible we make it available on our website. We also provide specific documents in other formats should they be requested.

### Decision making

Our Fire Authority meeting information and reports are also available on-line and members of the public are welcome to attend Fire Authority meetings as observers to see how we manage the Service.

All of our financial and performance information is available via the website [www.ddfire.gov.uk](http://www.ddfire.gov.uk)



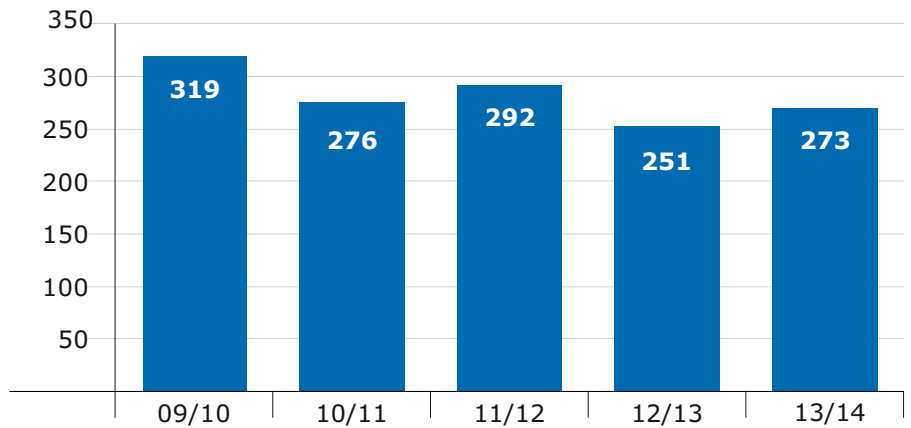


## Performance

As an emergency service it is extremely important that we regularly review our performance across a range of measures. We look closely at performance trends to see how well we are doing and we compare our performance against other fire and rescue services on a regular basis. The following section sets out a snapshot of our performance in a number of key areas. Further information is available from the website or by contacting us.

### Accidental house fires

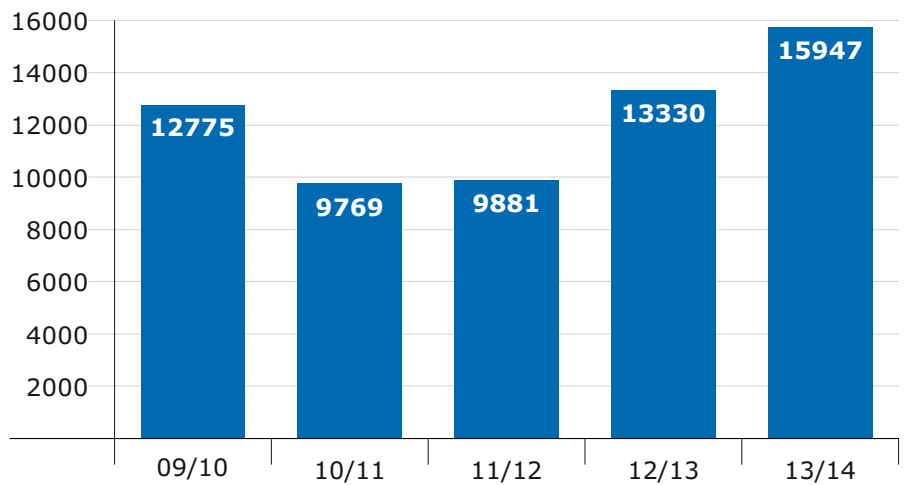
Accidental house fires are lower than five years ago due to our increased prevention work focussing on home fire safety visits particularly targeting those most vulnerable and at risk. However, they remain a priority area for us.



Number of accidental house fires

### Home fire safety visits

The number of home fire safety visits, which are carried out by our firefighters, has increased significantly over the last few years as the changes we have introduced to work routines have improved the amount of productive time available. More than 80% of the visits undertaken are carried out in high risk areas or involve vulnerable people. This increase in performance has had a direct impact on driving down fires in people's homes.



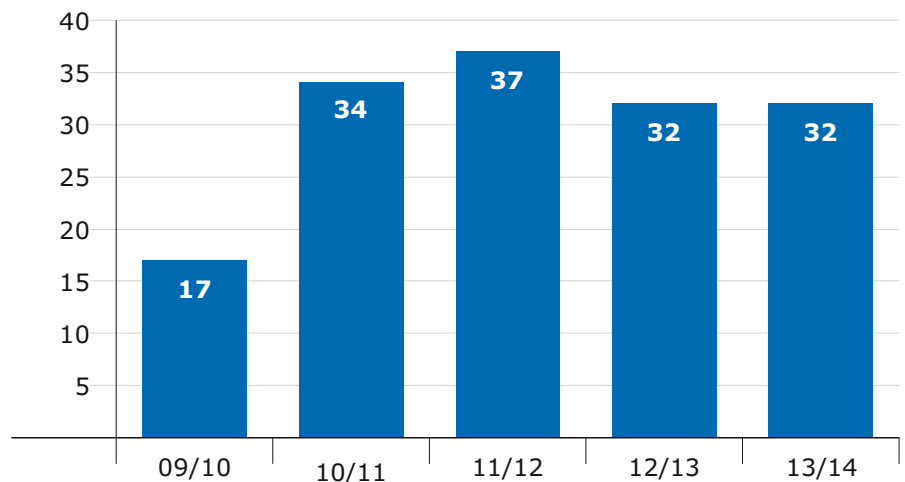
Number of home fire safety checks undertaken



## Safest People, Safest Places

### Injuries to the public in accidental house fires

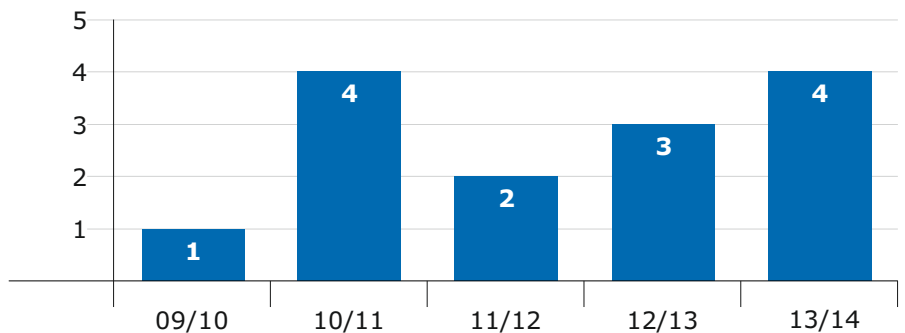
Whilst we have reduced the number of accidental house fires, the number of injuries to the public has remained generally static. We analyse the circumstances where injuries are occurring and we will continue to use this information to inform the prevention work that we undertake in future years to reduce injuries from fire in the home.



Number of house fire injuries

### House fire fatalities

Although focusing on prevention has resulted in a significant long-term reduction in the number of fire fatalities that occur in our area, four people died in accidental house fires last year. Reducing the number of people who die in a house fire remains one of our main priorities but an ageing population and the recent changes to welfare policy provide greater challenges for us in terms of prevention. Key to improving our performance in this area is the Fire Fatalities Protocol that the Authority has established with partner agencies such as local authorities, police, social care providers, drug and alcohol teams and housing providers. Through this arrangement we have provided fire awareness training to the staff of these agencies to assist us in identifying the most vulnerable in our communities. We have also introduced a process by which this data can be shared so that appropriate prevention measures can be implemented.



Number of fire fatalities in the past five years



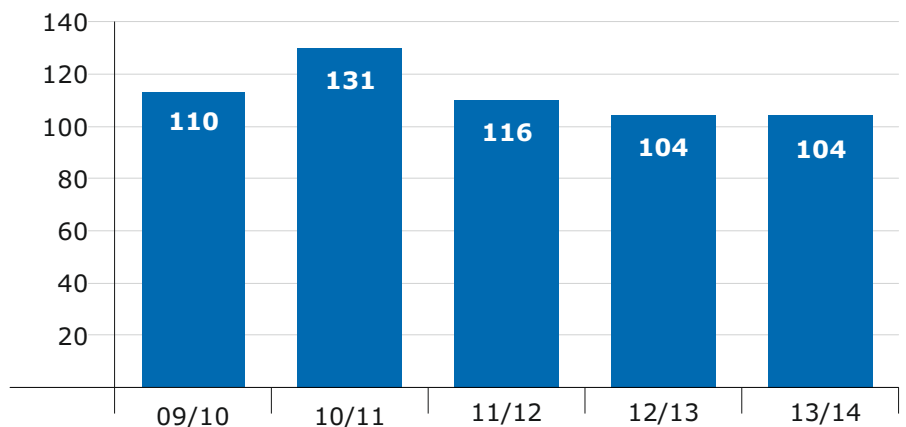
# 77%

of non-domestic property fires attended within 8 minutes



## Non-domestic property fires

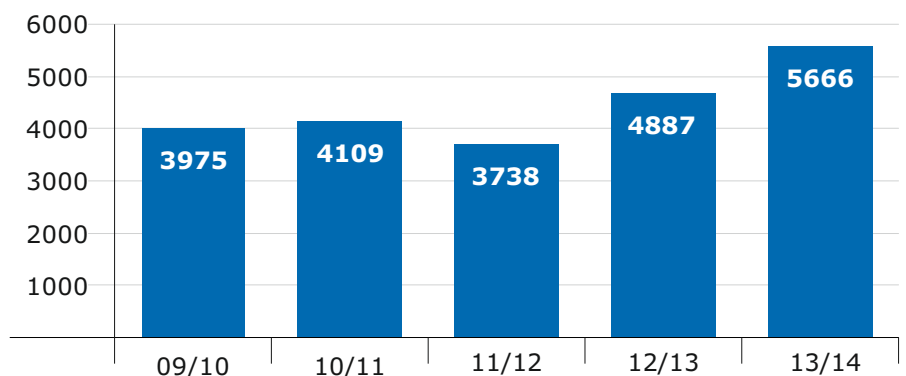
These figures include fires in public, commercial and industrial premises. Although our performance has improved over the last five years we aim to continue to improve our performance in this key area as this type of fire can have a significant impact on our local economy.



Non-domestic property fires

## Fire safety audits

By introducing new working routines on fire stations and transferring work to frontline firefighters, we have been able to deliver a significant increase in the number of premises receiving a fire safety audit, despite a reduction in the number of centrally based fire safety staff.



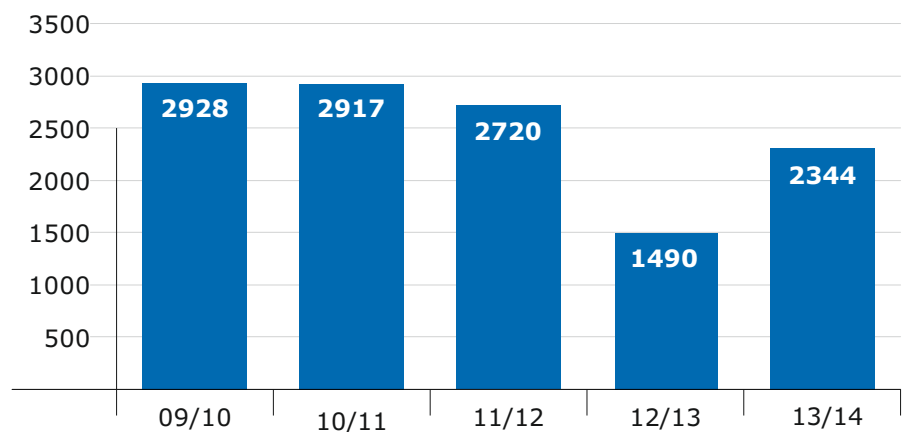
Number of fire safety audits (five year trends)

# The wet summer of 2012 led to an unusually low number of small fires that year

## Small fires

The wet summer of 2012 led to an unusually low number of small fires that year. Last year saw the number return to expected levels although the 5 year trend is still downward. Whilst these types of fire which include rubbish, bonfires, grass and gorse fires do not often pose a direct significant risk to the public, they divert our resources away from other key activities and therefore we will continue to work to achieve further reductions in this area. The number of smaller fires that we attend is, to some extent, linked to the prevailing weather conditions.

There is a recognised link between deliberately set small fires and other forms of antisocial behaviour. Research has shown that a disproportionate number of deliberate fires are started by children and young people therefore education and engagement with this group is key to reducing these incidents.



**Small fires in the past five years**





# 88%

of road traffic collisions  
attended within 11 minutes

## Emergency response standards

Our emergency response standards set out how quickly we aim to respond to certain types of emergency incidents.

The standards relate to the time it takes to get the first fire appliance to the scene from the time it is alerted by our Fire Control Centre.

## Current response rates

Response standard	2013/14 target	2013/14 actual
% of house fires attended within 8 minutes	70%	<b>72.2%</b>
% of house fires attended within 11 minutes	90%	<b>90.6%</b>
% of non-domestic property fires attended within 8 minutes	70%	<b>77.7%</b>
% of non-domestic property fires attended within 11 minutes	90%	<b>92.6%</b>
% of road traffic collisions attended within 11 minutes	75%	<b>88.4%</b>
% of road traffic collisions attended within 15 minutes	90%	<b>95.6%</b>

Achievement of our response standards helps us to maintain an excellent response service to our local communities. If the Service is to continue to meet these standards over the medium term we need to consider different ways of working given the anticipated on-going reductions in funding.

# Our operational staff are trained to exceptionally high standards

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## Assurance

As an emergency service, we recognise that it is extremely important that we can demonstrate that we are operationally competent and that we manage the fire and rescue service in line with the expectations of a modern public service. We also need to ensure we can demonstrate that we provide value for money and that we spend public money in accordance with the expectations of local council tax payers.

### Operational assurance

We have systems and standards in place that are designed to ensure that everything we do is in accordance with health and safety regulations. We have agreed ways of doing things and standard procedures so that we can address operational matters consistently and in accordance with recognised best practice.

Our operational staff are trained to exceptionally high standards to ensure that they can undertake their work to the standards that are expected of them.

### Financial assurance

Our financial performance is considered on an annual basis by the external auditor who provides the Authority with a report on the financial statements. Details of previous audit reports are available from the website or on request. The latest approved accounts were signed off by the auditor in September 2013. The auditor provided the Authority with a clean bill of financial health and confirmed that value for money was being achieved.

### Governance assurance

Our decision making processes are transparent and we consult on our key projects and initiatives prior to the Combined Fire Authority making final decisions.

Our structures reflect the requirement to ensure we have good governance processes in place and we employ qualified professional staff whose role it is to ensure good governance is embedded throughout the organisation.

The Authority prepares an annual governance statement that gives details of its approach to governance and the key risks that exist. This is also available on the Service website [www.ddfire.gov.uk](http://www.ddfire.gov.uk)



# It is becoming more and more difficult to reduce our costs without increasing risk in local communities

## Finance and resources

### The financial challenge

We are facing the most significant financial challenge in our history as a fire and rescue authority. Our central government funding has been cut by 26% since 2010, meaning a reduction in the money we have to provide services of £3.53M between 2010 and 2014.

So far, we have been able to reduce our costs by providing services in different ways without increasing risk in local communities.

### Efficiency

We have implemented significant changes in the way we provide all of our services over a number of years. We have already

implemented the vast majority of the cost savings measures identified as best practice demonstrating that our fire and rescue service is already lean and efficient.

Our crewing arrangements and shift systems are amongst the most efficient in the country despite having some of the busiest fire appliances nationally with some stations covering areas twice the national average. We also have a very lean support staff and management structure.

We always strive to identify new ways of working that do not increase risk in local communities. However, this is becoming more and more difficult, particularly as the majority of our services are statutory and because our service model is already very efficient.

Examples of how we have achieved an extremely efficient service model include:

- Operational staff agreeing to alter the shift systems to shorten night shifts and removing non-productive time;
- Reduced crewing on multi-pump stations;
- Introducing new duty systems on lower call volume stations;
- Introducing annualised hours for all operational staff;
- Introducing self-rostering for day crewing stations;
- Responding to small fires using smaller fire appliances;
- Introducing a mixed crewing arrangement allowing full and part-time staff to work together more effectively.

## Safest People, Safest Places

### How the Fire Authority is funded

Funding for your local fire and rescue service is provided from two main sources: the government provides 45% of our funding by way of grant; the remaining 55% is received from local council tax payers and non-domestic rate-payers in County Durham and Darlington.

Central government is cutting the grant funding it provides to us.

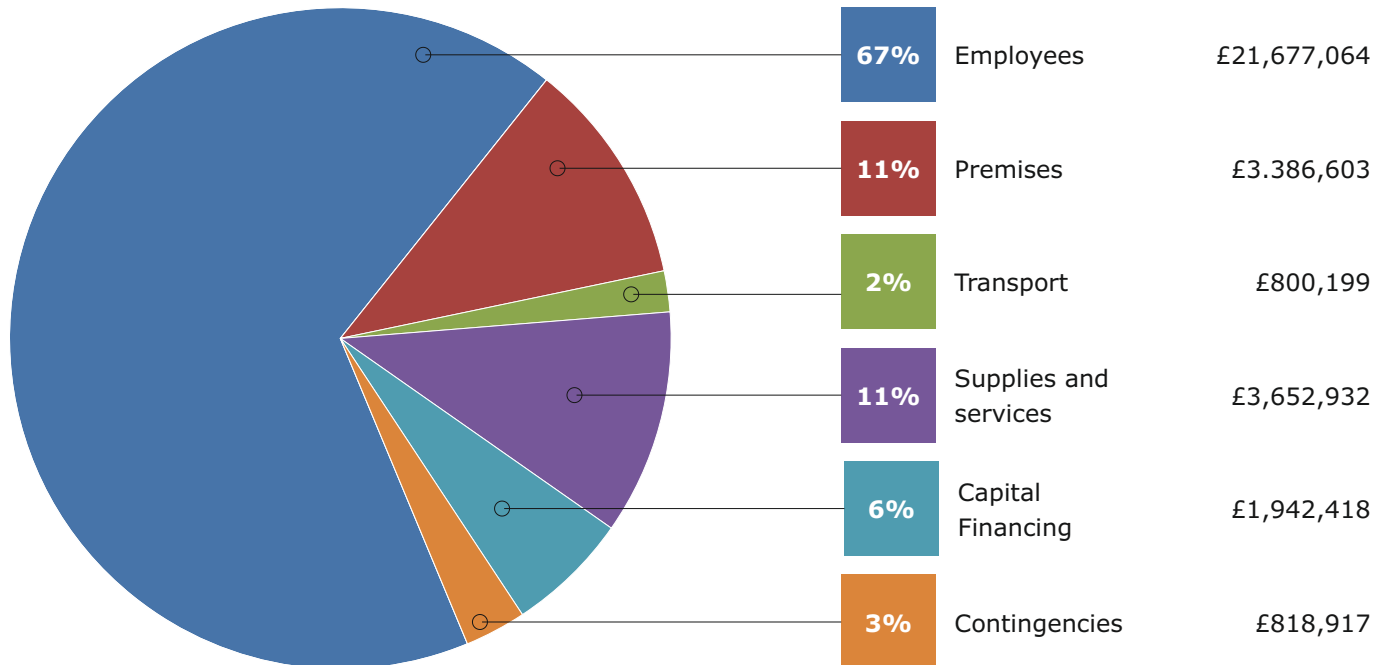
Since 2010 we have transformed the way we provide services to the community. We have reduced headquarters based staff and transferred the workload to our frontline operational staff on fire stations. This has enabled us to make the required £3.53m of savings without reducing performance or increasing risk. However, we have reached a point where any further changes are likely to have a detrimental impact on our operational resources.

The option of reducing frontline services would inevitably not only impact on emergency response but also significantly reduce the

capacity of the organisation to deliver prevention and protection activities, which have been a major contributor to the reduction in emergency incidents we attend.

We have worked hard to help staff understand the reasons behind changes and how they can make a contribution by changing working practices and taking on new work to improving efficiency. Changes to duty systems, increased mixed crewing of appliances, delivering training through associate trainers rather than centrally based staff are all examples of how our staff are embracing change.

### How the money is spent (2014/15)





## Our medium term financial plan

At a time when the future is so uncertain, it is important that we have a medium term financial plan in place. This will allow us to work towards balancing the budget over the medium term taking account of our expectations of future central and local funding.

Our medium term financial plan for 2015/16 to 2016/17 is set out below. We have assumed that:

- funding reductions for 15/16 - 17/18 will be an average of the previous two years;
- pay awards will be 1.5% each year;
- council tax increases by 1.9% each year.

### Revenue budget

	15/16 £m	16/17 £m	17/18 £m
Total government funding	11.886	11.069	10.398
Local non-domestic rates income	1.478	1.508	1.538
Council tax income	14.967	15.251	15.541
<b>Total funding</b>	<b>28.331</b>	<b>27.828</b>	<b>27.477</b>
Total net spend	29.601	30.624	31.036
Less savings already identified	-0.893	-0.893	-0.893
<b>Revised total net spend</b>	<b>28.708</b>	<b>29.731</b>	<b>30.143</b>
<b>Funding gap</b>	<b>-0.377</b>	<b>-1.903</b>	<b>-2.666</b>



## Safest People, Safest Places



### Estates improvement programme

Despite the challenges of reductions in revenue budgets, prudent financial planning has enabled the Authority to invest in modernising fire stations, training facilities and providing a fit for purpose headquarters building.

Several of the projects have already been delivered, with a number of others in the build phase. They represent part of a wider programme of collaboration that will deliver significant financial savings and operational improvements as well as real benefits to local communities. The programme supports the Government's policy direction around increased collaboration and integration of emergency services and allows efficiencies to be realised without reducing frontline services.

We have shared our fire station in Darlington with the North East Ambulance Service for several years. From this year ambulance crews will also operate from our fire station in Middleton-in-Teesdale.

In 2013, we established the first joint fire/police station in Newton Aycliffe.

We are working with Durham Constabulary to open a joint Fire/Police Training Centre in 2015 that will be truly innovative and possibly the first of its kind in the UK.

We are seeking government funding to deliver improvements to several of our fire stations that are no longer fit for purpose.



# Seeking your views on our future plans

In the last 4 years, we have been forced to cut £3.53m from what we spend on your fire and rescue service but predicted further reductions in government funding over the next 3 years mean we may need to find further savings of £3.6m.

So far the changes we have made have delivered savings without significantly impacting on the front-line services we provide. However, going forward there are some difficult decisions to be made as finding new ways of working that do not increase risk to our local communities is becoming more and more difficult, particularly as the majority of our services are statutory duties.

It is likely that a number of the options we will need to examine will have an effect on frontline resources and impact on risk to our communities. To better understand the views of people living and working in County Durham and Darlington, we are seeking the views of local people, our staff, partners and other stakeholders on the following proposals:

## Proposal one - sharing our buildings with the police and ambulance service

In May 2013, the Government published the findings of a review into the efficiency of fire and rescue services. The report suggests ways in which fire and rescue services can collaborate with each other and with other blue-light services to improve services and reduce costs in a period of ongoing funding cuts. One way of reducing costs whilst improving the services we provide is to share our buildings, something this Authority already does with both the police and ambulance services.

For example, in 2013 we opened the first joint fire/police station at Newton Aycliffe and we have successfully shared our fire station site in Darlington with the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) for several years. More recently, we have been successful in securing government funding to build a joint fire/police training centre at Bowburn. Due to open in 2015, the shared facility represents a truly innovative approach to training the emergency services and is believed to be the first of its kind in the country.

We are committed to building on the success of these projects and it is our intention to co-locate the Police and/or the Ambulance Service at our fire stations where it is feasible and beneficial to do so. To do this, we have established a joint project with Durham Constabulary and NEAS to identify opportunities for co-locating staff and resources into shared accommodation to help reduce costs and support our local communities in a more integrated way. We are seeking government funding to enable us to do this.

### Q1) Do you agree that we should share the following fire stations with our partners?

- **Barnard Castle (Fire, Police, Ambulance and Mountain Rescue)**
- **Stanhope (Fire and Police)**
- **Crook (Fire and Police)**
- **Sedgefield (Fire and Ambulance)**

### Proposal two - expand the role of our firefighters to include responding to specific medical emergencies

In recent years, we have successfully reduced the number of fires and other emergencies that our firefighters are called to attend. However, the number of medical emergencies that our colleagues in the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) attend each year has increased significantly placing greater demand on their emergency responders.

Our firefighters already work closely with our NEAS colleagues and train regularly so we can provide an excellent service when attending emergencies together. Our priority has always been about putting the patient first and this Authority has invested in equipping our fire appliances with quality medical equipment and training our firefighters in first aid and trauma care.

We are keen to support our NEAS colleagues and also enhance the services we provide the communities of County Durham and Darlington by training our firefighters as co-responders. Co-responders are firefighters who are also trained in basic life support. They respond, along with the ambulance service, to specific medical emergencies in their local communities.

Co-responder firefighters will be, first and foremost, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service employees. The priority is to ensure our fire stations maintain adequate emergency response cover and, if sufficient cover is available, then a firefighter may co-respond to medical emergencies such as:

- **Cardiac arrest;**
- **Serious/uncontrollable bleeding;**
- **Breathing difficulties;**
- **Unconscious patient;**
- **Choking;**
- **Signs of shock;**
- **Diabetic/epileptic emergency;**
- **Suspected stroke;**
- **Traumatic injuries.**

There are already successful co-responder schemes in place in other parts of the country. They are intended to support the ambulance service where firefighters may be first on the scene and will always be supported by a paramedic as quickly as possible. Firefighters are not expected to act as paramedics, as they are not trained to undertake this role.

**Q2) Do you support our intention to have appropriately trained firefighters respond to specific medical emergencies in support of the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS)?**



## Proposal three - review how we crew the aerial ladder platform appliance based at Darlington

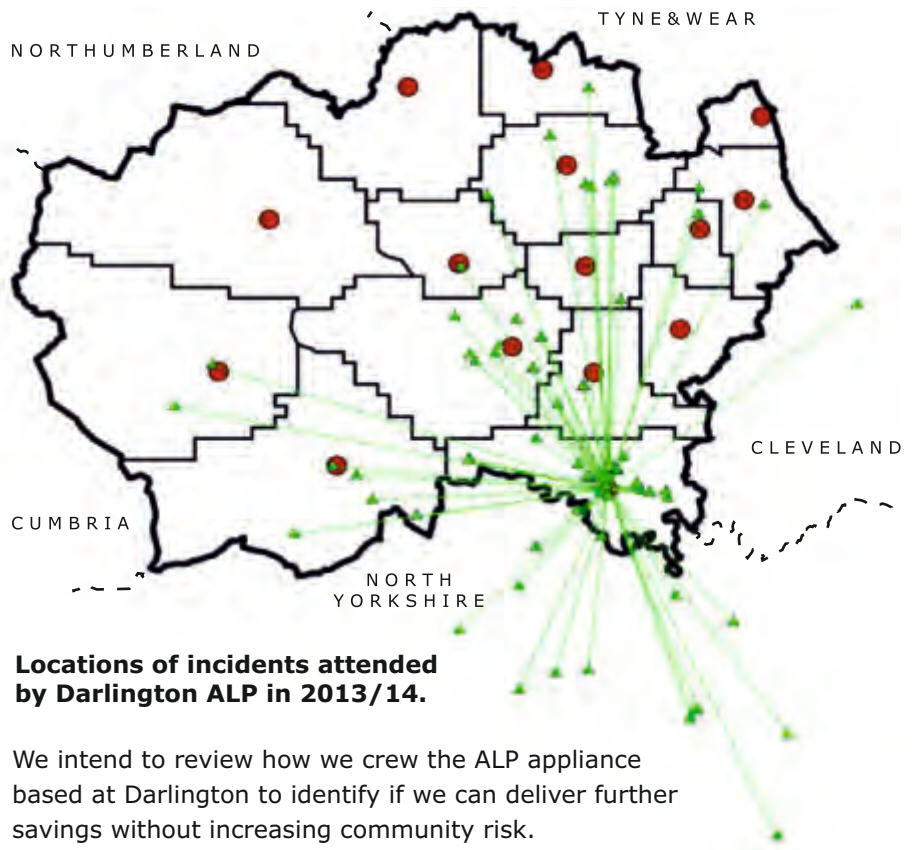
This Authority currently maintains two specialist vehicles called Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALP) that are based at our fire stations in Durham City and Darlington.

An ALP has the capability of reaching floors in buildings which are higher than the ladders carried on our fire appliances can reach. They are used either to provide a high platform from which firefighters can fight a fire, or to enable firefighters to gain access to high places. The ALP appliances are only sent out to emergency incidents when an incident commander at the scene decides the ALP is needed.

In 2013, we changed the way we crew the ALP based at the fire station in Durham. Previously two fulltime firefighters were assigned to crew the vehicle 24 hours a day. The change involved moving to a dual-crewing system where the fulltime firefighters crewing the other fire appliances based at Durham fire station will transfer over to the ALP when it is needed. They are supported by retained duty system firefighters based at Durham.

Following implementation, our analysis shows the response times of the ALP appliance at Durham are largely unaffected by the changes but we delivered savings of around £306k per year by reducing the number of firefighters needed at Durham fire station.

The ALP based at Darlington fire station attends around 90-100 calls per year across the County Durham and Darlington area and also provides support to our neighbouring fire and rescue services in North Yorkshire and Cleveland as the map below shows.



We intend to review how we crew the ALP appliance based at Darlington to identify if we can deliver further savings without increasing community risk.



**Aerial Ladder Platform.**

**Q3) Do you agree that we should staff the Aerial Ladder Platform at Darlington in a similar way to how we staff the Aerial Ladder Platform at Durham?**



### Proposal four - review the number of emergency response fire officers

The firefighters we employ to crew the fire appliances based at our fire stations deal with the majority of the day-to-day emergency incidents we are called to attend.

We also employ a number of emergency response fire officers who respond in cars equipped with blue lights and sirens to provide support to firefighters attending emergency incidents. They are all trained in advanced incident command so they can take charge of large scale or more complex incidents but are often also qualified to undertake specialist roles such as hazardous materials advisor or fire investigation officer. These officers work a flexible duty system to ensure we always maintain sufficient numbers to provide incident command and specialist support 24/7.

When not responding to emergency incidents, these fire officers have day to day managerial responsibilities that include managing fire stations or working within the training centre or other specialist support functions based at our headquarters.

We intend to review the number of flexible duty officers we employ to establish whether savings can be made whilst maintaining our ability to effectively support our incident command system.

**Q4) Do you agree we should review the number of emergency response fire officers we employ?**

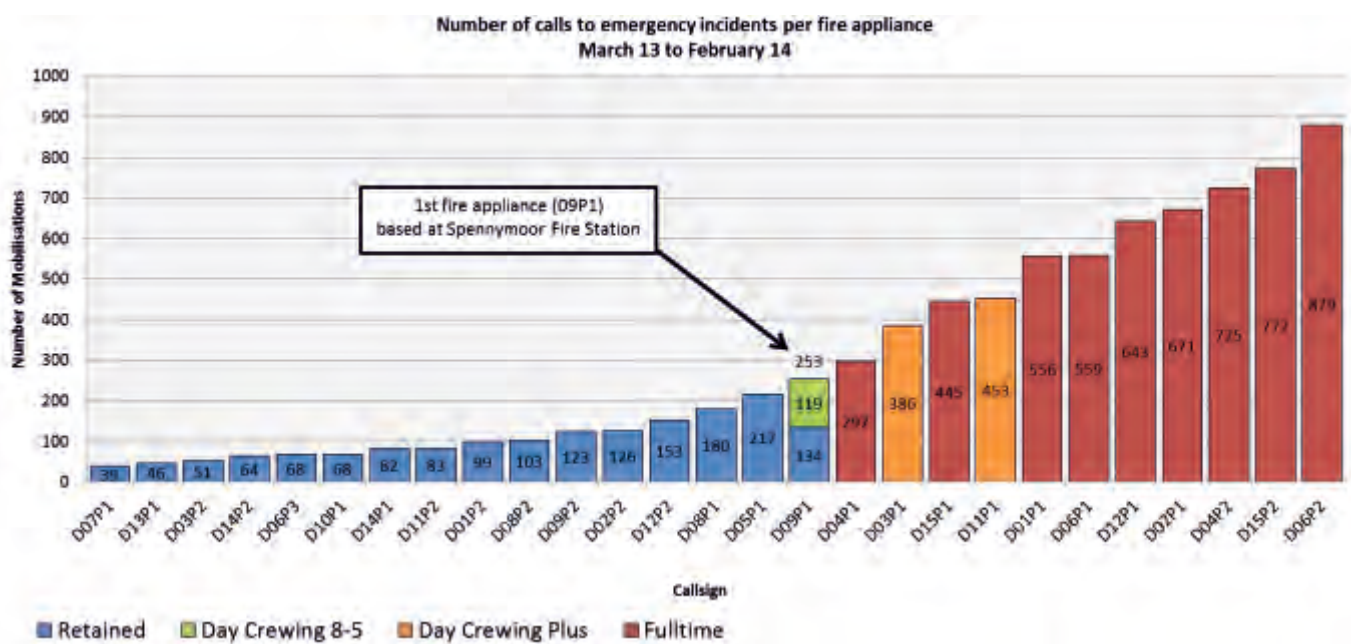


## Proposal five – review how we crew the first fire engine at Spennymoor Fire Station

We operate a range of duty systems to ensure we have the right number of skilled firefighters available at the right time and in the right place to respond to emergencies.

As part of our research and evaluation of numerous options for delivering efficiency savings without increasing risk to our communities, we have used computer modelling to assess the impact of changing the location of our fire stations and how we crew our fire appliances.

As the graph below shows, our analysis of activity levels reveal that the first fire engine at Spennymoor (callsign 09P1) is the least busy of our fire appliances that are crewed by fulltime firefighters on an immediate response basis.



Two of our twenty-seven front-line fire appliances are based at our fire station in Spennymoor. The first appliance is crewed using fulltime firefighters who work the day-crewing duty system to provide an immediate daytime response Monday to Friday. At night and at weekends, crewing of the first appliance is undertaken by retained duty system firefighters who are 'on-call' from work or home to respond to the fire station within five minutes.

We remain committed to not reducing the number of fire appliances or fire stations we provide across the County Durham and Darlington area. However, the relatively low number of calls that the first fire appliance based at Spennymoor fire station responds to has led us to consider reviewing how we crew the first fire appliance to better reflect local risk and activity levels.

Changing the crewing system to a fully 'on-call' system using retained duty system firefighters would deliver significant savings but would result in a reduction in fulltime cover during the day in Spennymoor and reduce the level of cover in the central part of our service area.

**Q5) Do you agree that we should review our staffing model at Spennymoor Fire Station?**



# Let us know your views

This is your fire and rescue service and we welcome your views, taking them into account when we make decisions.

Please let us know your views on our proposals by answering the five questions below:

## Consultation

Question	Please tick	
<b>Q1</b> Do you agree that we should share the following fire stations with our partners? • Barnard Castle (Fire, Police, Ambulance and Mountain Rescue) • Stanhope (Fire and Police) • Crook (Fire and Police) • Sedgefield (Fire and Ambulance)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Q2</b> Do you support our intention to have appropriately trained firefighters respond to specific medical emergencies in support of the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Q3</b> Do you agree that we staff the Aerial Ladder Platform at Darlington in a similar way to how we staff the Aerial Ladder Platform at Durham?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Q4</b> Do you agree we should review the number of emergency response fire officers we employ?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Q5</b> Do you agree that we should review our staffing model at Spennymoor Fire Station?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: .....

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Name and address (optional): .....

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You can take part in our consultation by clicking on 'IRMP Consultation' on our website:

[www.ddfire.gov.uk](http://www.ddfire.gov.uk)

Alternatively, you can tear off this page and send it to us at:  
County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters,  
Belmont Business Park, Durham, DH1 1TW



## **Find Out More & Contact Us**

Our website provides more information about us, what we do, where we are located, latest news and much more.

[www.ddfire.gov.uk](http://www.ddfire.gov.uk)

**Alternatively, you can contact us at:**

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters  
Belmont Business Park  
Durham  
DH1 1TW

**Tel: 0845 305 8383**

**Fax: 0191 3866353**

**Minicom: 0191 3847524**

**Email: [ServiceHQ@ddfire.gov.uk](mailto:ServiceHQ@ddfire.gov.uk)**

**HQ Opening Times:**

8.30am-5.00pm Monday -Thursday

8.30am-4.30pm Friday

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