

Scottish Fire Services

Second verification of the progress of modernisation

Prepared for the Accounts Commission

October 2004



The Accounts Commission

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- securing the external audit
- following up issues of concern identified through the audit, to ensure satisfactory resolutions
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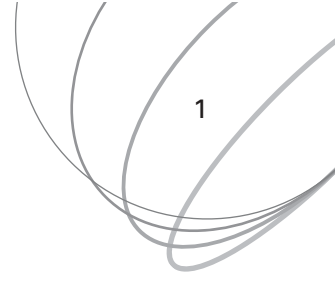
Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the fire service in Scotland, and its elected members, for their considerable assistance to us and our auditors in carrying out this review.

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Preface

The pay and conditions agreement

The fire service National Joint Council signed a pay and conditions agreement on 13 June 2003. The agreement describes a five-stage pay award, with stages two and three subject to the completion of certain negotiations and the 'verification by the Audit Commission (England and Wales), Accounts Commission (Scotland) and Government (Northern Ireland) that the intended benefits (including savings) of the various national changes are being delivered locally'.

Scope and nature of this report

This report is the outcome of the second phase of the Accounts Commission's verification of progress made by Scottish fire authorities in implementing the modernisation agenda, as set out in the pay and conditions agreement. Separate arrangements for reporting were made in England and Wales, and in Northern Ireland. The audit was undertaken by Audit Scotland, on behalf of the Accounts Commission. The Accounts Commission report from the first phase, *The Scottish Fire Services: Verification of the Progress of Modernisation*, published in March 2004, is available on the Audit Scotland website: www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

The work was carried out as a study under Section 97A of the 1973 Local Government (Scotland) Act.

This report does not comment on the pay award. It concerns itself with giving a view on whether the intended benefits of the various national changes are being delivered locally.

Glossary and general context

The fire and rescue service uses many specialised terms and acronyms. A glossary of the terms used in this report is included in Appendix 1.

In this report 'the fire service' means the fire and rescue service in Scotland and 'fire authority' refers to the Joint Board or local authority committee responsible for the service. Contextual information on the eight fire authorities in Scotland is provided in Appendix 2.

There are many changes facing the fire service at present. The details are set out in the following documents:

- *The Scottish Fire Service of the Future*: Policy paper issued by the Scottish Executive, April 2002.
- *The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service: Proposals for Legislation*, October 2003.
- Scottish Executive circulars on Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP): 4/2003, issued 3 April 2003; 7/2003, issued 8 September 2003; 11/2003, issued 31 December 2003.
- Circular 2/2002, issued July 2002, set out changes required in the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS).
- The Fire (Scotland) Bill, introduced to the Scottish Parliament, 28 June 2004.

This report assumes a reasonable familiarity with these background documents and a working knowledge of modernisation in the fire service.

Summary



Fire authorities have made progress towards modernisation since February 2004, but there is still a significant amount of work to be done before there is real change on the ground.

The study

1. This is our second report on the progress of modernisation in the Scottish fire and rescue service. We have based our conclusions on evidence collected by our auditors during July 2004. In this work we concentrated on what had changed since February 2004, when the first phase of the verification audit was conducted. The findings from the first phase were published in the Accounts Commission report *The Scottish Fire Services: Verification of the Progress of Modernisation* in March 2004.

2. For this study, we assessed the progress being made by each fire authority in the following areas:

- Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP).
- Changing from rank to role.
- The Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS).
- Pre-planned overtime.
- Alternative duty systems.
- Part-time working and other conditions of service.
- The modernisation agenda.
- The financial aspects of modernisation.

3. The first six of these areas are mentioned specifically in the pay agreement. The last two areas, the modernisation agenda and financial aspects, are, in our view, essential to forming a balanced view. These are the same areas that we looked at in the first phase of the audit, with the exception of the financial aspects of modernisation, which is a new area reviewed in phase 2. Where possible, we assessed progress against Scottish guidance. When this could not be done, we used our best judgement, based on accepted good practice.

Our findings

4. Fire authorities in Scotland have made progress since February 2004. Overall:

- two authorities have made good progress – Lothian & Borders and Strathclyde
- two authorities have made reasonable progress – Highlands & Islands and Tayside
- four have made some progress – Central Scotland, Dumfries & Galloway, Fife and Grampian.

5. In our report on the first phase of the audit, *The Scottish Fire Services: Verification of the Progress of Modernisation*, we identified some specific areas where more progress was needed in line with the pay and conditions agreement and Scottish Executive policy statements and guidance. These were:

- systems for collecting and reviewing IRMP data
- developing an IRMP action plan
- involvement of elected members in planning and implementing modernisation
- costing action plans and building into authorities' budget planning eg, in IPDS and rank to role
- changes in overtime, duty systems and use of part-time working.

6. We have found significant progress in the first three of these areas. However, progress in relation to costing of action plans, and changes in pre-arranged overtime, duty systems and part-time working is more mixed across the country, with less progress overall.

7. Information on resource implications is limited, and we cannot yet assess intended savings across all fire authorities. This is an area where further action is required.

8. There is scope for closer working both between departments within individual fire authorities and between authorities. Authorities should also consider accessing appropriate skills and resources available in external agencies, both at a national level and locally through their community planning partners.

9. Our audit has confirmed that progress is being made towards modernisation. Working practices are being reviewed and plans are being developed. There is still a significant amount of work to be done before there is real change on the ground, but the necessary early steps are being taken and the building blocks are in place.

10. This is a long-term project which will have a major impact on both the culture and management of the fire service in Scotland. If the objectives are to be achieved, the Scottish Executive (responsible for the overall guidance) and fire authority members and fire-masters (responsible for local change) will have to sustain their commitment over a lengthy period. Now stages 2 and 3 of the pay deal have been agreed, the way should be clear for real progress in such areas as overtime and duty systems.

11. This audit provides independent assurance that fire authorities in Scotland are making progress with modernisation, as defined by the Heads of Agreement. Best Value audits of the fire service will continue to provide independent scrutiny. In drawing up its future programme of work, the Accounts Commission will consider what further work it will undertake to examine the impact of the changes currently being implemented in the fire service in Scotland.

Part 1. Aim, approach and overall results



Aim

12. The verification study set out to assess progress by the fire service in implementing changes detailed in the national pay and conditions agreement of June 2003. We examined how well each fire authority was progressing with:

- delivering an effective integrated risk management plan (IRMP)
- changing from rank to role
- introducing an integrated personal development system (IPDS)
- using pre-planned overtime
- considering and planning for alternative duty systems
- considering and planning for part-time working and other alternatives
- delivering on the wider modernisation agenda
- dealing with the costs of modernisation (the financial diagnostic).

13. The first six of these areas are mentioned specifically in the pay agreement. The last two areas, the modernisation agenda and financial aspects, are, in our view, essential areas to review, enabling us to form a balanced view of progress.

The audit approach

14. In this second and final phase of verification, we used the same method and approach as in the first phase, so that broad comparison can be made with the results from phase 1. This is the same approach as used by the Audit Commission for the audits in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

15. We brought in one additional area for phase 2, the financial diagnostic. Our work in phase 1 showed that many fire authorities had not yet been able to assess and budget for the costs of modernisation. At phase 2, five months later, we considered it appropriate to look specifically at how well the authorities were doing this, including the need to identify and plan for savings.

16. During July 2004, our auditors collected evidence of progress against all the areas outlined in paragraph 12. We concentrated on what had changed since February 2004, when the first stage of the verification audit was conducted.

17. Following the audit in each of the eight fire authorities, the findings were reviewed for consistency of approach and scoring through a moderation process. This process is described in Appendix 3.

The Scottish context

18. Although the June 2003 pay and conditions agreement applies to all fire authorities in the UK, responsibility for the fire service is devolved to the Scottish Parliament. The environment in which the fire service operates in Scotland is different from the rest of the UK, both in terms of the legislative framework, and in relation to guidance and timescales prescribed by the Scottish Executive.

Exhibit 1

Scoring scale for phase 2 of the audit

Colour	Meaning
Green	Good progress. Guidance and deadlines met. Plans set up properly and being met by action. Evidence clearly demonstrates progress.
Amber plus	Reasonable progress since phase 1. Guidance and deadlines met. All plans in place and some progress on delivery. Evidence supporting compliance and progress is strong.
Amber	Some progress since phase 1. Guidance and deadlines met. Most plans in place and some progress on delivery.
Red	Little or no progress. Guidance not fully met. Limited planning, or plans not yet being actioned. Evidence shows little progress.

Source: Audit Scotland

19. The Fire (Scotland) Bill was published at the end of June 2004. It is intended to remove many of the current barriers to modernisation to enable the service to move more quickly to a preventive rather than reactive fire service, and to give the service greater flexibility to respond to the needs of local communities. In England and Wales, the fire service already has the necessary legislation in place in relation to these areas.

20. The Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 has also had an impact on how the fire service in Scotland is delivering community fire safety. Community planning partnerships are now setting the direction for fire authorities to deliver improvements in community fire safety locally.

21. In addition to the legislative differences between Scotland and the rest of the UK, the guidance and timetable for integrated risk management planning, a key element of modernisation, are also different. Fire authorities in Scotland are required to have developed an IRMP by 31 December 2004, and to implement it from 1 April 2005, a year behind

the timetable for England and Wales. Progress on some of the other aspects of modernisation, in particular duty systems and the use of pre-arranged overtime, is linked to risk management planning.

22. We have reflected these differences in the second phase of the audit through tailoring some of the audit materials to the Scottish situation and in the way we have assessed and scored progress.

Overall results

23. In phase 1, we scored authorities on a green/amber/red traffic-light system, and, in phase 2, we continued to use the same scoring method for each aspect of modernisation. However, in line with the Audit Commission, we have adopted a slightly different scale for the overall assessment at phase 2, and introduced an 'amber plus' category ([Exhibit 1](#)). We did this because we found that the middle 'amber' category was too broad to recognise that some authorities had progressed significantly further than others since the phase 1 assessment.

24. [Exhibit 2 \(overleaf\)](#) shows the top-level results for each fire authority in Scotland using the scale in [Exhibit 1](#). Of the eight authorities, two (Lothian & Borders and Strathclyde) have made 'good progress' (green) since January 2004, two (Highlands & Islands and Tayside) have made 'reasonable progress' (amber plus) and four have been assessed as having made 'some progress' (amber). The overall assessments are formed from an aggregate score, based on progress against all the constituent elements within each aspect of modernisation. This approach gives more weight to progress in IRMP and IPDS compared with other aspects.

25. This represents significant progress over the last six months by all fire authorities in Scotland. Much of this work has been conducted in a difficult industrial relations climate.

26. In phase 1 of the verification audit, conducted in February 2004, all fire authorities were assessed overall as making 'some progress'. There were no areas where any authority had made good progress, and a

number of areas where most authorities had made little or no progress. The findings from phase 1 are reproduced in Appendix 4, and comparisons between phase 1 and phase 2 are in Appendix 5.

Areas of improvement

27. The phase 1 audit identified a number of areas as requiring progress. In phase 2 we found significant improvement in three of these areas:

- **Systems for collecting and reviewing IRMP data** – since phase 1, the Fire Services Emergency Cover (FSEC) model has been successfully rolled out across Scotland, and risk maps are now being produced to inform risk management planning.
- **Developing an IRMP action plan** – most authorities have developed, and are implementing, detailed actions plans to ensure they meet the timetable prescribed by the Scottish Executive for IRMP.
- **Involvement of elected members in planning and implementing modernisation** – all authorities now have member-led working groups overseeing the development and implementation of IRMP, and other aspects of modernisation.

28. Through the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), authorities in Scotland have taken a cooperative approach to developing and progressing some of the key areas of modernisation, in particular, some activities related to IRMP and IPDS. Progress in these areas has been assisted by the establishment of a number of national working groups (eg, on data collection and analysis) which have enabled good practice to be promoted across all authorities.

Challenges for the future

29. In two of the areas identified in phase 1 as requiring more work, progress has been more variable across Scotland, with less progress overall:

- **Costing action plans and building them into authorities' budget planning** – managing the financial aspects of modernisation still requires further work. Authorities need to be more rigorous in costing their action plans, and incorporating these costings into their annual budget cycle and longer-term financial planning.
- **Changes in overtime, duty systems and use of part-time working** – progress in all these areas has been limited in Scotland; elements of this work are dependent on finalising work on IRMP (in particular, in relation to duty systems), and these areas have also been affected by the difficult industrial relations situation during the period under review. However, greater progress needs to be made in these areas for staff and the service to benefit more from modernisation.

30. Changing duty systems and the introduction of part-time working for operational firefighters are both challenging areas for fire authorities. Continued commitment, both nationally and locally, will be required in order to ensure change is delivered on the ground.

31. Some authorities have increased their human resources capacity during the period under review, which is to be welcomed. However, authorities should do more to pool their resources to help drive through these complex changes. There is scope for closer working, both within individual fire authorities and between authorities. In addition, authorities should look to accessing appropriate skills and resources available in external agencies at a national level, and locally through their community planning partners.

32. The following sections summarise the progress made in the last six months across Scotland in the eight areas reviewed.

Exhibit 2

Phase 2 results for the eight Scottish fire authorities

Fire Brigade	Overall assessment	IRMP	Rank to role	IPDS	Overtime	Duty system	Part-time working	Wider modernisation	Financial diagnostic
Central Scotland	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow
Dumfries & Galloway	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Fife	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Grampian	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow
Highland & Islands	Orange	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow
Lothian & Borders	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green
Strathclyde	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green
Tayside	Orange	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow
Little or no progress									
Some progress									
Reasonable progress									
Good progress									

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Part 2. Integrated risk management planning



Background

33. Integrated risk management planning is the means by which the fire service is moving away from a nationally-specified regime of fixed standards of fire cover based largely on risk to property, to a locally-derived system founded on minimising the risk of loss of life.

34. The timetable for IRMP in Scotland is different to that in the rest of the UK. All Scottish fire authorities are required to have prepared an IRMP plan by 31 December 2004, with the ability to implement it from 1 April 2005 – a year behind the timetable for England and Wales. At the time of the phase 2 audit, two authorities (Lothian & Borders and Strathclyde) had already published draft IRMP plans, but the other six authorities were still working to meet the Scottish timetable for draft plans to be produced and consulted on by the end of December 2004.

What did we look at?

35. Our assessment focused on the extent to which each fire authority had:

- put the necessary building blocks in place, including clear leadership and commitment from members
- identified existing and potential risks to the community
- assessed the effectiveness of current prevention and intervention work
- assessed the opportunities for improvement, and determined the local policies and standards needed to implement them
- understood and assessed the resource requirements of implementing the IRMP plan
- developed robust implementation, monitoring, audit and review systems

- arranged for effective consultation on the draft IRMP plan
- met the guidance and timescales prescribed by the Scottish Executive for delivering these elements of IRMP.

Phase 1 audit

36. The phase 1 audit found that:

- systems for collecting and reviewing data required further work
- authorities needed to develop IRMP action plans
- there was a lack of involvement and ownership of the IRMP process by elected members
- further work was required in reviewing existing standards and local policies within the context of IRMP
- the cost implications of plans needed to be properly estimated and built into budget and planning cycles.

Exhibit 3

Progress on Integrated risk management planning among fire authorities since phase 1



Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Phase 2 audit

Overall findings

37. All fire authorities have made progress in their approach to IRMP since the phase 1 audit. Highland & Islands, Lothian & Borders, Strathclyde and Tayside have made good progress, while Central Scotland, Dumfries & Galloway, Fife and Grampian have made some progress. This represents a significant improvement since phase 1, when five authorities had made little or no progress and only three authorities had made some progress (Exhibit 3).

What has changed?

38. We identified a number of improvements since the phase 1 audit:

- Fire authority members have now become more involved in IRMP. Across all authorities, training and briefings have been provided and leading members are regularly updated on IRMP issues. Member-led working groups are now established in all authorities to lead on, and take ownership of, the IRMP process.
- The Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) model has been successfully rolled out across Scotland, and authorities have adopted a more systematic approach to reviewing and assessing data. All authorities have dedicated personnel to progress work in relation to both IRMP and FSEC. A considerable amount of data has been input locally into FSEC and authorities are now beginning to use the software as part of their risk modelling.
- In most authorities, a closer synergy is developing between the community fire safety department and the staff taking forward IRMP. However, there is scope for a more systematic approach to interdepartmental working to reduce duplication and enable authorities to benefit more from the pooling of resources.
- Authorities are reviewing existing standards and local policies, such as those relating to automatic fire alarms, with new policies being implemented in a number of authorities. There is increased use of call challenging procedures to reduce resources lost to malicious or hoax calls.
- All authorities have developed consultation strategies. Internal and external consultation is planned or underway using a number of mechanisms (eg, the introduction of an IRMP newsletter; questionnaires to staff and local companies; station visits; and use of intranets, public meetings, and local media) to ensure that information about IRMP is disseminated widely. However, some of these require further tailoring to ensure all sections of the community are suitably involved in the consultation process.

Exhibit 4

Some examples of good practice in IRMP

- The MapInfo Geographic Information System developed by Fife Fire & Rescue Service captures and depicts a wide range of incident and risk data in a user-friendly map or bar chart format, at a range of scales. Optional aerial photographs bring the information to life and make it easier to grasp the relationship between the data and the geography of the area. Risk hot spots can be plotted and compared to the location of fire stations so that the deployment of station resources can be compared to the risk profile of specific areas.
- Lothian & Borders Fire Brigade conducted extensive consultation on its draft IRM plan. Joint presentations by officers and members were made to constituent councils and community safety partnerships. A programme of station visits incorporated presentations on the draft IRM plan, as did a retained officers' seminar. Advertisements were taken out in local newspapers across the Lothian & Borders area, and copies of the plan sent to MSPs, libraries, employee groups, community planning partners, and posted on the internet and intranet. The plan was available in Braille and minority languages to those who requested it. A specific email address, telephone number and address were provided to capture feedback, in a manageable way, from the consultation process. Feedback has been evaluated and responses made on an individual basis. A report on the consultation, the feedback received and the management evaluation of the feedback is to be presented to the Fire Board in September 2004.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Areas for further work

39. We identified the following areas as requiring further work:

- Some authorities need to move on quickly from capturing data on incidents to developing robust risk maps for their communities.
- Most authorities need to develop further their reviews of existing policies and service provision, and to feed this information into their IRMP, to demonstrate that services are effectively meeting identified risks.
- The financial implications associated with the development and implementation of IRMP need to be more fully assessed and incorporated into authorities' budgeting cycles.
- Some authorities need to improve the coordination of input to their IRM plan, both from other departments within the authority and from external agencies.

Part 3. Rank to role



Background

40. The term 'rank to role' is used to describe the requirement for fire authorities to change from formal operational ranks to a less hierarchical employee grading structure, with clear links to the roles and competencies that relate to the work people do.

41. The implementation of rank to role has been affected by the national pay award negotiations. National Joint Council (NJC) Circular (15/03) has been issued, intimating that authorities should wait until further national guidance before 'making decisions about national roles'. However, some authorities have continued to make preparations for implementing the proposed changes, in anticipation of receiving further guidance. The audit concentrated on the work undertaken as part of these preparations.

What did we look at?

42. We asked three questions:

- What progress has the authority made on developing an action plan to deliver the move from rank to role?
- Has the authority fully assessed and provided for the resource implication of the move from rank to role?
- Are employees and other key stakeholders fully aware of the plans and processes involved, and the role they have to play?

Phase 1 audit

43. In the phase 1 audit we found:

- very limited evidence of progress in the development of action plans to support the necessary transition from rank to role

- authorities unable to demonstrate that they had estimated the cost of moving from rank to role, and incorporated these estimates into financial planning
- a lack of attention paid to internal communications.

Phase 2 audit

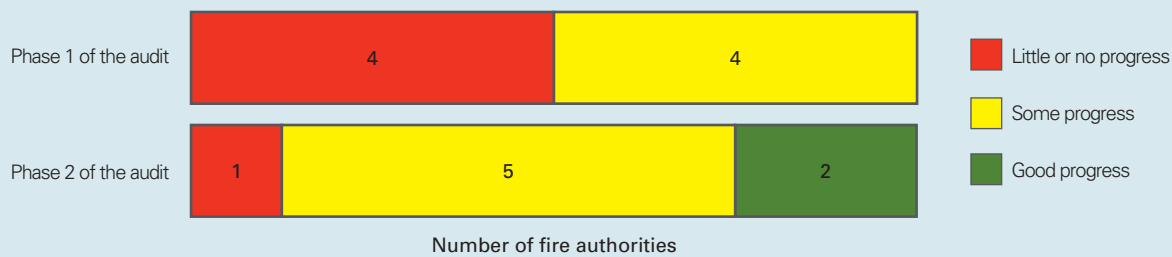
Overall findings

44. Seven of the eight fire authorities have made progress in the move from rank to role since the phase 1 audit, two of which have made good progress (Lothian & Borders and Strathclyde). One fire authority (Central Scotland) had made little or no progress ([Exhibit 5 overleaf](#)).

45. Those authorities making less progress had consciously given this area a lower priority, following the issue of NJC Circular (15/03).

Exhibit 5

Progress on rank to role in phase 2



Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

What has changed?

46. We identified a number of improvements since the phase 1 audit:

- Most authorities have developed action plans in preparation for the move from rank to role.
- There has been effective communication to staff on the implications of rank to role in Lothian & Borders and Strathclyde, using staff newsletters, intranet sites, station meetings, and, in Strathclyde's case, a booklet containing detailed information on rank to role (*'It's all about you'*) issued to all staff.
- The larger authorities have made progress in identifying the cost implications arising from the move from rank to role.

Areas for further work

47. Further national guidance in relation to rank to role would assist progress in this area. Work is also required by authorities to:

- integrate rank to role with other aspects of modernisation
- develop a more rigorous assessment of the financial implications of new roles, and incorporate costs into budgetary planning
- continue and improve communication with front-line staff on the personal implications for them of rank to role, especially staff in retained stations.

Exhibit 6

Examples of good practice in rank to role

Although NJC Circular (15/03) stated that authorities should await further national guidance before 'making final decisions at this stage on the allocation of roles to existing jobs', Lothian & Borders Fire Brigade has developed its own methodology to assess ranks and decide the appropriate role. As a result, the authority identified, for example, that the role assimilation will result in sub officer posts in multi-pump stations transferring to crew command roles, and has taken appropriate action.

The authority is one of a small number in the UK which will pilot the complete rank to role transition for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Part 4. Integrated personal development system



Background

48. The IPDS is an overarching development strategy encompassing all fire service staff at every stage in their career. It aims to enable staff to reach and maintain the level of competence required to fulfil their role as outlined in National Occupational Standards. It should ensure a progressive move away from traditional approaches to training towards a system of continuing professional development that marries the training needs of individuals to service requirements.

49. A national approach to the implementation of IPDS has been adopted in Scotland, coordinated by the Scottish Fire Services College. A partnership between the eight fire authorities, the College and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), is enabling IPDS to be taken forward on a consistent basis across all authorities.

What did we look at?

50. In our assessment we reviewed the extent to which authorities had:

- management structures to support the implementation of IPDS
- kept employees and stakeholders aware of the plans and processes involved in IPDS and the role they have to play
- complied with prescribed guidance
- continued to implement their action plan, drawn up on the basis of the IPDS gap analysis
- prepared for the introduction of workplace assessments on a programmed basis
- prepared robust resource estimates for the implications of IPDS in 2004/05 and beyond.

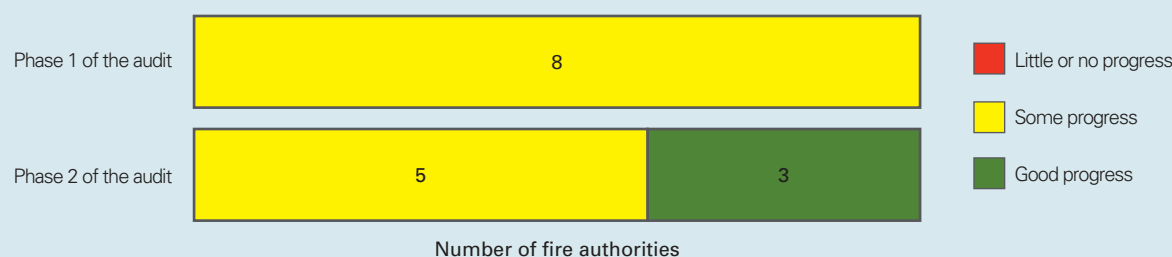
Phase 1 audit

51. The phase 1 audit found:

- a lack of progress in costing the implementation of IPDS, with most authorities unable to demonstrate the existence of fully costed action plans approved at authority level
- a lack of clarification in relation to the implications for individual staff with regards to IPDS, coupled with the need to communicate information more succinctly
- a need to further develop action plans arising from the gap analysis addressing staff training requirements.

Exhibit 7

Progress in IPDS since phase 1



Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Phase 2 audit

Overall findings

52. All fire authorities have made progress in the roll-out of IPDS since the phase 1 audit. Three have made good progress (Lothian & Borders, Strathclyde and Tayside), and the remaining authorities have all made some progress (Exhibit 7). In phase 1, all authorities had made some progress.

What has changed?

53. We identified a number of improvements since the phase 1 audit:

- As with IRMP, elected members have become more involved in the process and interviews with members demonstrate commitment to the principles of IPDS. In most authorities, they receive regular training and updates on progress from senior management, and IPDS is frequently a standing agenda item at board or committee meetings.
- Dedicated staffing resources are now in place to support the development of IPDS across all authorities.
- Staff are better informed about IPDS. Presentations and station visits have been undertaken in all authorities to support the implementation of IPDS. Information from the Scottish Fire Services College about IPDS developments (newsletters and briefing material) is well distributed throughout most authorities.
- The majority of authorities have developed, and are implementing action plans, derived from their gap analyses. These plans have become a useful tool to inform progress and identify areas that require to be addressed on an ongoing basis.

Areas for further work

54. Further work is required to:

- improve communication with staff, tailored to the needs of specific staff groups – in particular retained staff – and ensure concerns expressed by staff (eg, in relation to the levels of administrative work involved) are responded to promptly
- ensure IPDS-based training is related to each authority's performance management system
- assess the cost of additional training which will result from the implementation of IPDS, and incorporate these costs into the budget process
- improve capacity to provide for workplace assessments that support SVQs.

Exhibit 8

Good practice in relation to IPDS

The national approach to the implementation of IPDS in Scotland illustrates the benefits of collaborative working. The Scottish Fire Service Learning and Development Strategy lays out strategic aims and objectives for the implementation of IPDS in Scotland, and the IPDS team at the Scottish Fire Services College supports work in all the authorities. All eight authorities have signed up to the partnership model, all are members of the IPDS (VQ) Management Board and all are represented on the Assessment Boards. The Partnership Model is underpinned by SQA Approved Centre Quality Assurance policies and procedures. A website dedicated to IPDS in Scotland (www.IPDS.org.uk), gives access to an e-learning module to raise awareness of IPDS. All personnel attending training courses at the College receive presentations on IPDS. Fire service circulars issued in Scotland mirror those issued in England, with a member of the Scottish IPDS team sitting on the ODPM editorial panel responsible for the issue of all IPDS circulars.

All trainee firefighters are now undertaking an SVQ in Operations in the Community under national arrangements for workplace assessments. The Partnership model has approval from the SQA to deliver workplace assessor training across the Scottish Fire Service to the National Occupational Standards, and a Workplace Assessment Adviser has been appointed by the Scottish Executive to support this arrangement. A workbook, induction pack and guidance is now available to firefighters, and a workplace assessment e-learning module is under development.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Part 5. Pre-planned overtime



Background

55. As part of the pay and conditions agreement, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) lifted its long-term ban on pre-arranged overtime. This provides managers in the fire service with the flexibility to explore whether the use of overtime can bring efficiency savings or other benefits. Pre-arranged overtime may be taken by employees at premium rates of pay for up to 24 hours a month, averaged over six months and on a voluntary basis.

What did we look at?

56. Our assessment focused on the extent to which each authority had:

- reviewed and revised its policies on the use of overtime, in the context of IRMP, and sought to further the opportunity for increased efficiency or more flexible use of resources
- communicated its revised policies (where applicable) on the use of overtime, so that staff are aware of the changes and how they are to be implemented.

Phase 1 audit

57. In the phase 1 audit we found that:

- only one authority had carried out a formal review of overtime, the others had decided to await further development of their IRM plan
- there was no evidence that the benefits, which could accrue from increased use of overtime, had been costed.

Phase 2 audit

Overall findings

58. All eight fire authorities have made some progress in developing policies on the use of pre-planned overtime, an improvement from phase 1 when all but one authority showed little or no progress in this area ([Exhibit 9 overleaf](#)).

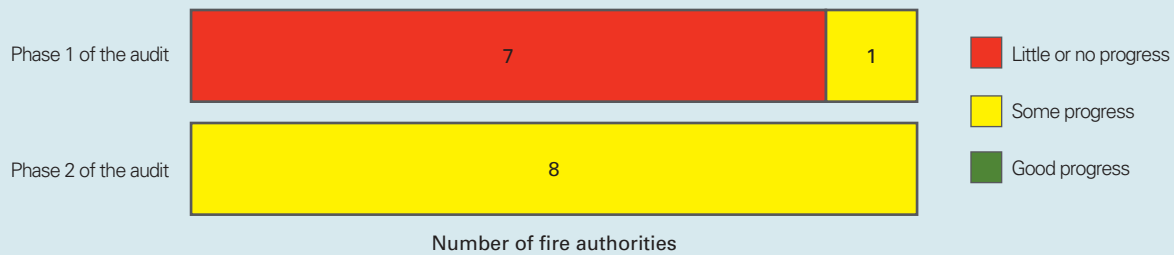
What has changed?

59. We identified a number of key improvements since the phase 1 audit:

- All authorities have reviewed their use of overtime, and have developed new policies on the use of pre-arranged overtime. These policies have been ratified at committee or board level in seven authorities, with one authority (Fife) currently working on a draft policy, pending resolution of the pay dispute.
- All authorities have prepared some costings on the use of overtime, and the majority have also developed clear guidelines on the implementation of the policy.
- Authorities have communicated the new policies to their staff, and in most authorities firefighters are generally aware of the policy developments and associated procedures in this area.

Exhibit 9

Progress in the review and use of pre-planned overtime in the phase 2 audit



Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Areas for further work

60. There is scope for authorities to adopt a more systematic approach to the use of overtime to meet the changing needs of the service. This area will need to develop further once authorities have agreed their risk management plans setting out new priorities.

61. Further work is also needed to improve communication to departments and staff about new policies and guidelines, prior to implementation, to ensure that they are aware of, and consulted on, the practical application of any guidelines.

Part 6. Duty systems



Background

62. The pay and conditions agreement makes it possible for fire authorities to introduce new forms of duty systems wherever this would help achieve the aims set out in the IRMP document. For example, an appliance might be crewed in a different way, or a station changed from whole-time to day crewing.

What did we look at?

63. Our assessment examined the extent to which each authority had:

- reviewed its current duty systems and considered alternative approaches
- made or planned changes consistent with the IRMP, and embarked on effective consultation and communication processes.

Phase 1 audit

64. In phase 1 we found no evidence of any comprehensive reviews of duty systems having been completed in any authority in the context of an IRM plan.

Phase 2 audit

Overall findings

65. All eight fire authorities have made some progress in reviewing and revising their duty systems ([Exhibit 10 overleaf](#)). This represents an improvement on the phase 1 audit when none of the authorities had made any progress.

What has changed?

66. We identified a number of improvements since phase 1:

- All authorities have started to review elements of their existing duty systems, most commonly in the areas of flexible duty systems and crewing arrangements. One authority (Grampian) introduced a two-year pilot scheme across the authority in January 2004, replacing the four-watch system with an eight-team system, which was aimed at creating greater integration between staff. This is subject to ongoing review.

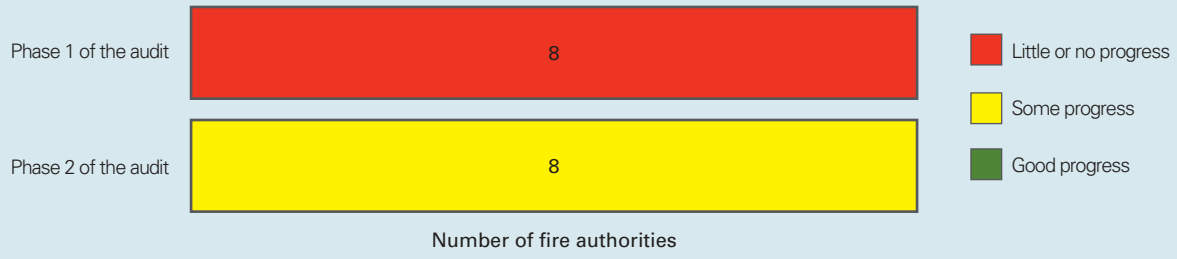
- Many authorities are now beginning to consider how changes to duty systems might be altered, in the context of IRMP, to increase the capacity of staff to deliver community fire safety (CFS) initiatives.

Areas for further work

67. This is an area where significant further work will be required once authorities have their draft IRM plans in place.

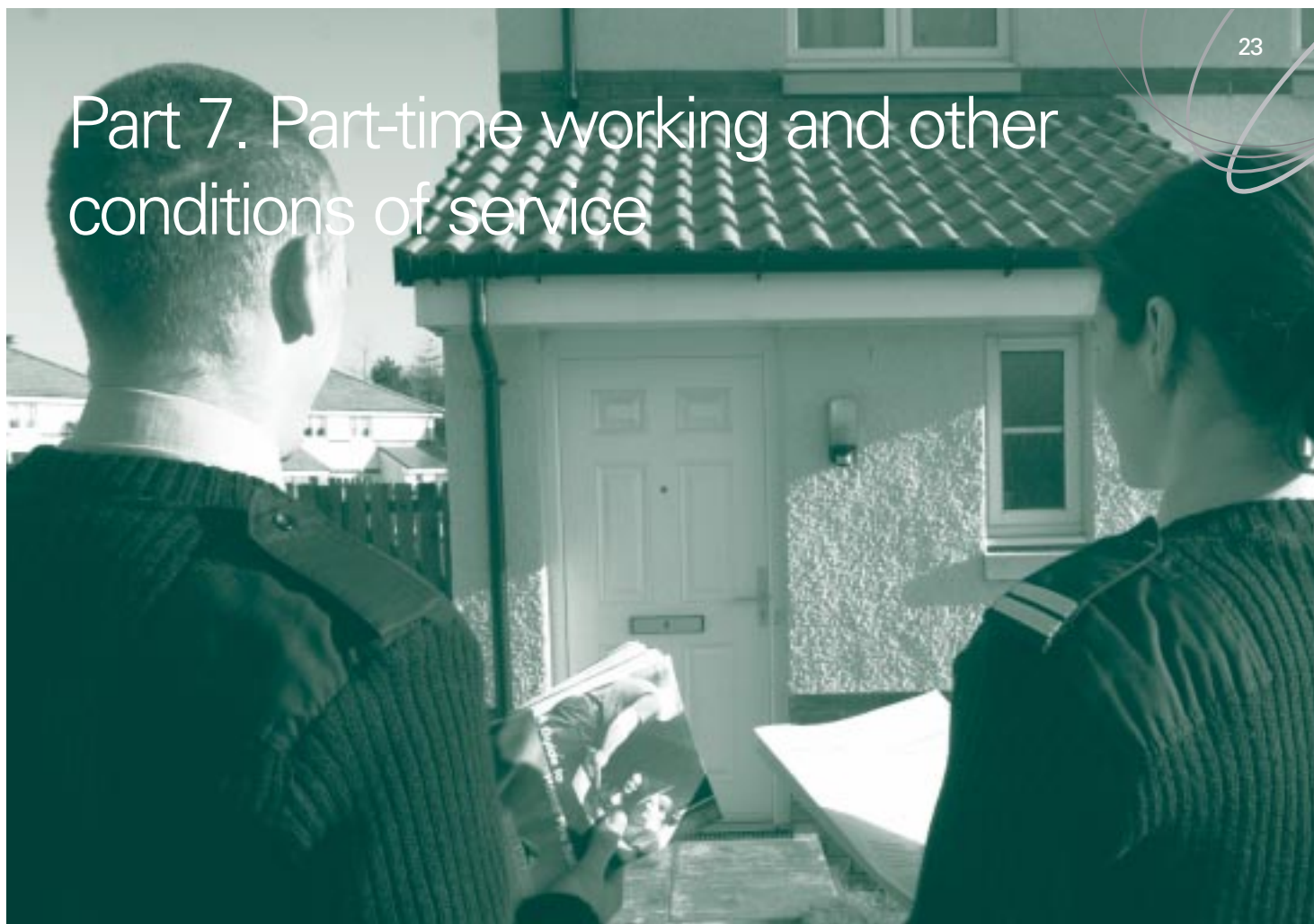
Exhibit 10

Progress in reviewing and applying alternative duty systems in phase 2



Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Part 7. Part-time working and other conditions of service



Background

68. The pay and conditions agreement provides for part-time working for all employees in the fire service. Part-time working is a new flexibility for operational firefighters (currently referred to as whole-time or full-time), and should not be confused with retained firefighters or with staff historically able to work on a part-time basis, such as support staff.

69. Changes to such conditions of service are not necessarily tied to IRMP and could have been implemented by fire services since the pay agreement in June 2003. They are intended to improve working conditions for staff and promote greater diversity, while boosting service efficiency.

70. We also reviewed mixed crewing (ie, whole-time and retained staff working together on appliances), and retained contracts for whole-time firefighters (this is one mechanism for addressing the shortage of retained firefighters in a number of areas in Scotland).

What did we look at?

71. We examined the extent to which each authority had:

- comprehensively reviewed its part-time working and other conditions of service, and considered alternative approaches
- made or planned changes that are in accordance with the outcome of their IRM plan and/or objectives of the organisation.

Phase 1 audit

72. The phase 1 audit found that:

- while a few authorities had made progress in negotiating local agreements for whole-time officers to carry out retained duties, many said that progress would need to await further development of their IRM plan
- no authority had undertaken a comprehensive review of part-time working or other conditions of service issues, far less implemented changes.

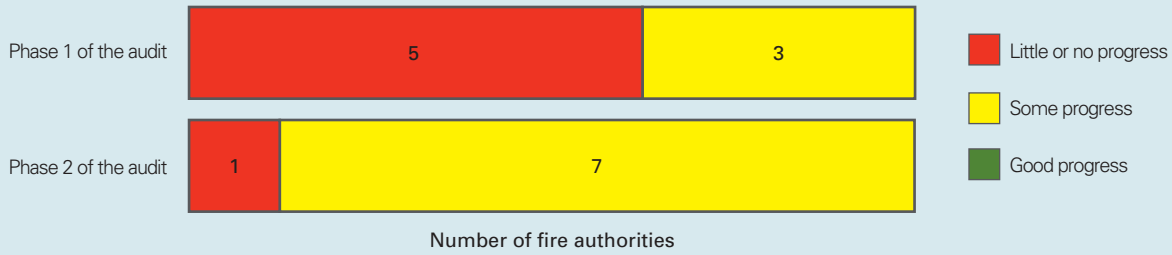
Phase 2 audit

Overall findings

73. Seven fire authorities made some progress in reviewing and amending conditions of service since the phase 1 audit. One fire authority (Central Scotland) had made little or no progress. At phase 1 of the audit, three authorities were rated amber for this category and five were rated red ([Exhibit 11 overleaf](#)).

Exhibit 11

Progress in part-time working in phase 2.



Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

What has changed?

74. We identified a number of improvements since the phase 1 audit:

- There are more instances of mixed crewing of appliances.
- Most authorities have now introduced policies that enable whole-time firefighters to work in retained fire stations, or to work extra shifts as retained firefighters.
- Grampian Fire & Rescue Services has embarked on a more fundamental review of part-time working and mechanisms for introducing more family-friendly policies. However, most authorities are awaiting the outcome of their IRMP before undertaking further work in this area.

Areas for further work

75. This is another area where significant progress is required. In particular, authorities need to:

- finalise policies that are still in development in relation to part-time working, and support these policies with practical guidance for staff
- dovetail the authority’s approach to part-time working and other conditions of service with IRMP, so that while working practices are driven by the requirements of the service, they take into account the needs of employees
- clarify the links between changes in employment practices and the diversity agenda, in particular for future recruitment
- assess the financial implications of implementing new policies in this area.

Part 8. The wider agenda



Background

76. This aspect of the audit provided authorities with an opportunity to demonstrate how they had made further progress with the wider modernisation agenda, outlined in the publication of *The Scottish Fire Service of the Future* (April 2002) and *The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service: Proposals for Legislation* (October 2003).

77. The modernisation agenda is wider than the implementation of IRMP and IPDS, and extends beyond those areas covered by the earlier diagnostic sections. We sought to examine authorities' approach to strategic planning, and their contribution to the wider government agenda of community planning and engagement, social inclusion and equality and diversity.

What did we look at?

78. We examined whether each authority had:

- a clear and well-communicated vision of what it is trying to achieve in respect of modernisation
- effective arrangements to deliver its key early priorities on the wider modernisation agenda
- made progress in delivering on some key aspects of modernisation
- set in place effective plans to deliver further its (revised) priorities, aims and objectives.

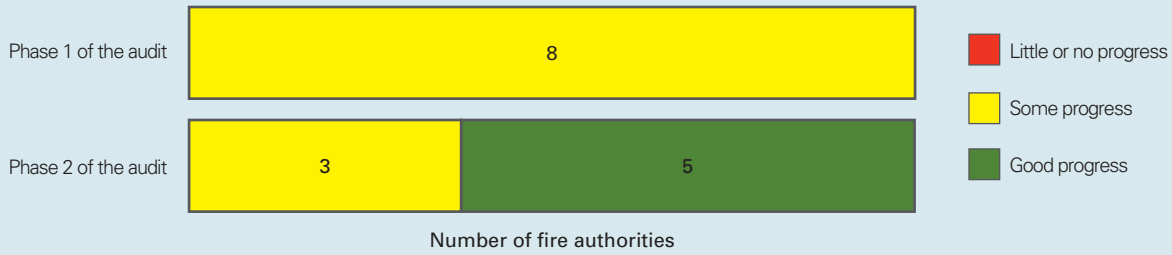
Phase 1 audit

79. The phase 1 audit found that:

- all authorities displayed evidence of some commitment to modernisation
- some elected members had been involved in initial discussions about the modernisation agenda and development of IRMP, but the strength of that commitment was unclear
- it was generally too early to judge the quality of IRMP development, far less the more detailed action plans that would follow
- there had been some progress on key aspects of modernisation, eg IPDS, and in areas where progress is not strictly dependent upon completion of the IRMP document.

Exhibit 12

Progress on the wider modernisation agenda in phase 2 of the audit



Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Phase 2 audit

Overall findings

80. This was the area where we found most progress. All fire authorities have made progress in delivering the modernisation agenda overall, with five (Grampian, Highland & Islands, Lothian & Borders, Strathclyde and Tayside) making good progress and the remaining three making some progress. This compares with all authorities making some progress in phase 1 ([Exhibit 12](#)).

What has changed?

81. We identified a number of improvements since phase 1:

- Increased levels of engagement by elected members and by senior officers in councils.
- Two authorities (Grampian and Tayside) have implemented major organisational restructures during the period of the review, to enable their organisations to meet the demands of modernisation more effectively.
- Most authorities now demonstrate a clear vision of what IRMP and the wider modernisation agenda are aiming to achieve, which is supported at senior management level, encapsulated within their draft IRMP documents and shared with staff.
- Authorities have improved their planning processes, with the development of a number of SMART action plans linked to the authorities' strategic objectives and their developing priorities arising out of IRMP.
- Authorities demonstrated a clear commitment to joint working with national and local agencies, to support a partnership approach to community safety work, with some innovative solutions to local problems and improved links with other emergency services.
- Some authorities have reviewed their staffing and applied to the Scottish Executive for authorisation to reduce their establishment (Section 19 applications).

Exhibit 13

An example of one approach to progressing equality and diversity

Tayside Fire Board has appointed an Equality and Policy Adviser to progress a culture of diversity and fairness within the Brigade. Among other responsibilities, the Adviser:

- supports and advises the Brigade's equality forum
- provides training on diversity and fairness issues
- administers the Brigade's 'Positive about Disabled' scheme
- supports the Brigade's 'Harassment Contact Advisor's Scheme'
- oversees the administration of the Brigade's maternity, paternity and adoption policies
- develops, implements and monitors recruitment procedures to help recruit staff who reflect the communities served by the Brigade, and ensure the recruitment service suits both the Brigade's and applicant's needs.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Areas for further work

82. Further work is required to:

- improve the integration and coordination between the various strands of work related to modernisation
- synchronise key documents eg, the IRM plan, overall service/business plan, departmental and operational plans, and the capital and revenue budgets
- mainstream and enhance community safety and preventative roles
- address the implications of modernisation for retained stations and firefighters, and improve communication with these staff
- develop more effective communication with those staff most affected by change, to improve morale in what is a prolonged period of uncertainty for many firefighters
- attract recruits to the service from a wider cross-section of the population
- ensure the monitoring and review of progress on modernisation is fully incorporated into the authorities' overall performance management system.

Part 9. Financial aspects of modernisation



Background

83. Every fire authority should now have action plans for the main areas of work related to modernisation, in particular for IRMP and IPDS. These plans should be properly costed, and prepared with the active involvement of skilled and experienced finance staff (either from within the brigade, or from one of the constituent councils). The financial implications of modernisation should have been fully considered at senior management level within the service and by the fire authority. Costs should be reflected in the service's key planning documents and reflected in the budget for 2004/05.

84. The Scottish Executive expects fire authorities, by April 2005, to be on track to introduce quantifiable improvements that are cost-neutral or produce savings, meet locally identified higher risks and reduce emergency response activity relating to avoidable calls.

What did we look at?

85. We did not address financial management issues in the phase 1 audit as a separate topic, although it was covered within the individual diagnostics. As a cornerstone of modernisation and given concerns within other areas of the phase 1 review around financial planning, it was introduced as an additional area for review in phase 2.

86. The assessment focused on the extent to which each fire authority had:

- properly costed all major action plans
- identified and costed efficiency gains consistent with the areas covered by the pay and conditions agreement.

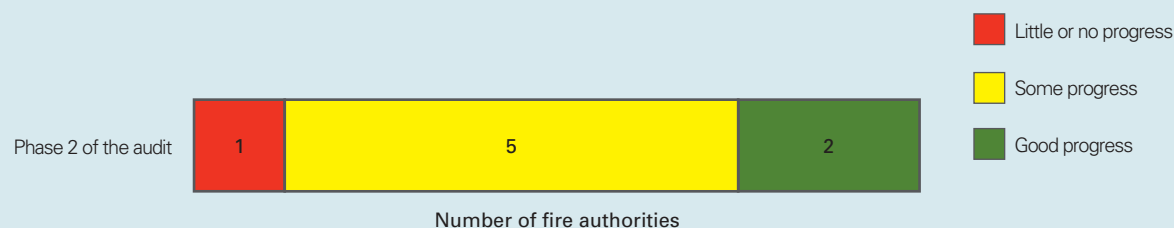
Phase 2 audit

Overall findings

87. Seven fire authorities made some progress in addressing the financial implications arising from the modernisation agenda. Two made good progress (Lothian & Borders and Strathclyde), while five made some progress. One fire authority (Fife) made little or no progress ([Exhibit 14 opposite](#)).

Exhibit 14

Progress on the financial aspects of modernisation in phase 2



Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

What has changed?

88. We identified that:

- only two authorities have taken full account of the budgetary implications of the pay award, and made progress in identifying areas of cost pressure arising from the modernisation agenda; the other authorities need to adopt a more systematic and robust approach to this area
- while finance staff in some authorities have been involved in costing the authority's proposals, this practice should be extended to all authorities
- where scope for efficiency savings have been identified, it is unclear whether these will be sufficient to compensate for any increased costs that might arise, for example from more frequent and employee-specific training that is likely to follow from embedding IPDS.

Areas for further work

89. Overall, there is a need for authorities to be more rigorous in identifying potential savings in relation to modernisation and financing the pay agreement in future years. In particular, further work is required to:

- keep members well-informed about the financial implications of modernisation, so that they can make informed decisions on policies and their implementation
- ensure the financial implications of IRMP proposals on other aspects of service provision are costed and fed into the 2005/06 budget setting process.

Appendix 1. Glossary

CFOA	Chief Fire Officers Association
CFS	Community fire safety
FBU	Fire Brigades Union
FSEC	Fire Service Emergency Cover – software issued by the ODPM to help authorities carry out the risk-mapping required for the IRMP
Heads of Agreement	Specific areas covered in the 2003 pay and conditions agreement
IPDS	Integrated Personal Development System
IPDS gap analysis	Identification of areas for development required for effective implementation of IPDS
IRMP	Integrated Risk Management Planning
NJC	National Joint Council – the national body responsible for negotiating the pay and conditions of service for uniformed employees, other than principal fire officers, in the UK fire service
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Pay and conditions agreement	An agreement signed by the NJC on 13 June 2003, reference NJC/01/03
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification

Appendix 2. Contextual information

Fire Brigade Revenue Expenditure in Scotland, 2002-03

Fire Brigade	Revenue expenditure (£000s)	% of Scotland
Central Scotland	11,313	5.2
Dumfries & Galloway	6,540	3.0
Fife	16,623	7.6
Grampian	18,486	8.5
Highland & Islands	12,754	5.8
Lothian & Borders	35,593	16.3
Strathclyde	97,596	44.7
Tayside	19,387	8.9
Scotland	218,292	100

Source: Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services for Scotland, Report for 2002-03

Geographic and Demographic Profile, 2002-03

Fire Brigade	Area		Population (estimated)	
	Kilometres (sq)	% of Scotland	Thousands	% of total
Central Scotland	2,643	3.4	279.5	5.5
Dumfries & Galloway	6,426	8.2	147.8	2.9
Fife	1,325	1.7	349.4	6.9
Grampian	8,736	11.2	525.9	10.4
Highland & Islands	31,187	40.0	276.6	5.5
Lothian & Borders	6,456	8.3	885.1	17.5
Strathclyde	13,625	17.5	2,208.6	43.6
Tayside	7,527	9.7	389.0	7.7
Scotland	77,925	100	5,061.9	100

Source: Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services for Scotland, Report for 2002-03

Scottish Fire Brigade Uniformed Personnel as at 31 March 2003

Fire Brigade	Uniformed Personnel Establishment			
	Whole-time	Control	Retained	Volunteer
Central Scotland	242	17	170	16
Dumfries & Galloway	105	18	220	10
Fife	390	21	112	0
Grampian	352	22	478	20
Highland & Islands	142	18	634	936
Lothian & Borders	763	30	310	0
Strathclyde	2,222	67	652	295
Tayside	409	18	279	30
Scotland	4,625	211	2,855	1,307

Source: Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services for Scotland, Report for 2002-03

Appendix 3. Moderation process

The moderation process involved a central team based at Audit Scotland headquarters assessing whether:

- the evidence collated in local audit reports supported the auditor's conclusions and recommendations, and whether each report was internally consistent
- auditors reporting on the eight fire authorities had compiled their reports on a consistent basis
- auditors' reports reflected progress made by fire authorities since the phase 1 audit in a manner that was consistent with the timeframe to which authorities in Scotland are progressing.

Following review by the moderation team, in discussion with the audit teams, a modest number of assessments were revised – some up, and some down. Revised reports were then discussed with representatives from each fire authority, to establish agreement both on factual accuracy and the local action plan.

Appendix 4. Phase 1 results

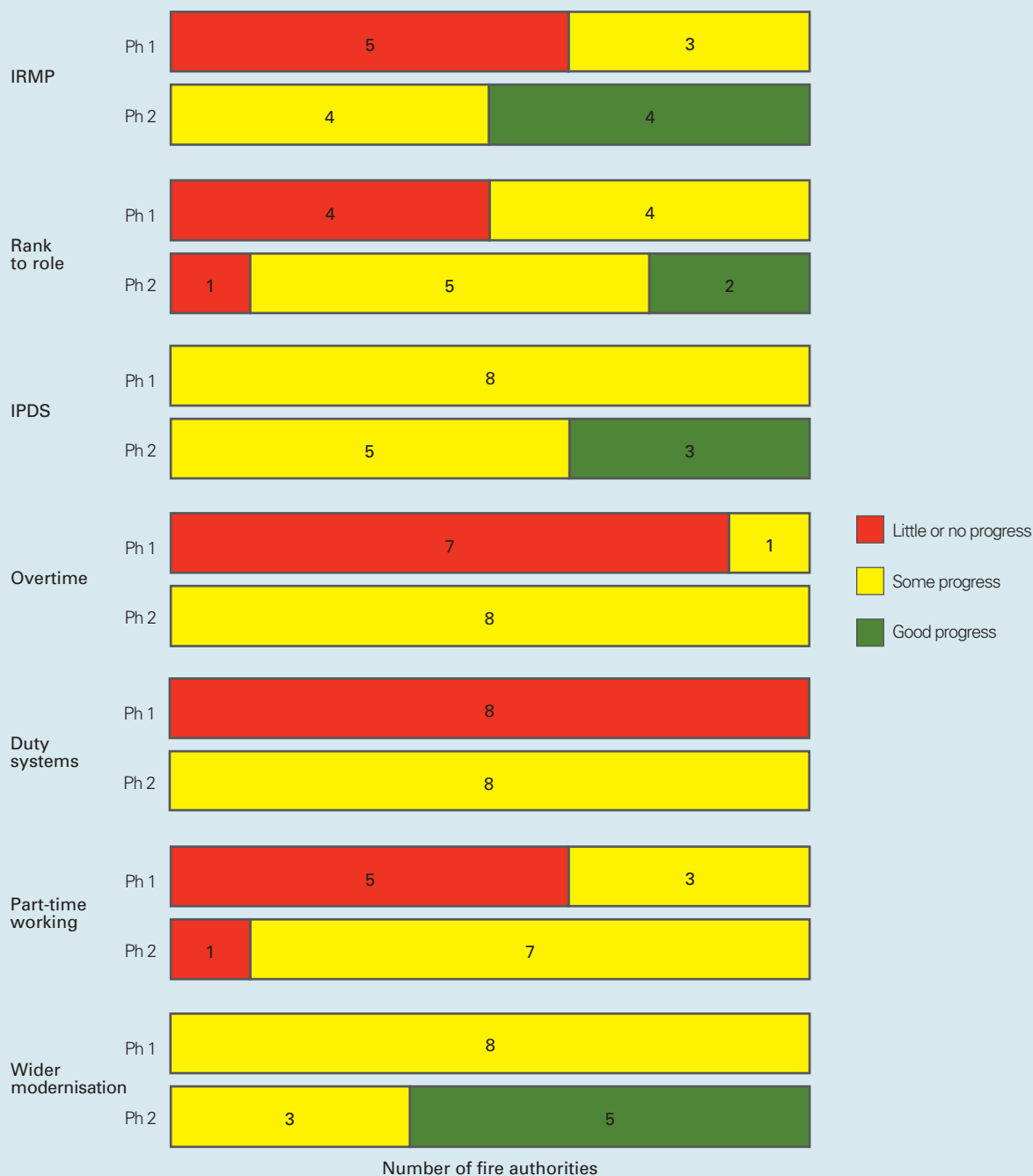
Findings from the first phase of the audit, published in the Accounts Commission report *The Scottish Fire Services: Verification of the Progress of Modernisation*, March 2004.

Fire Brigade	Overall	IRMP	Rank to role	IPDS	Overtime	Duty system	Part-time working	Wider modernisation
Central Scotland	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Yellow
Dumfries & Galloway	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Yellow
Fife	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Yellow
Grampian	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow
Highland & Islands	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow
Lothian & Borders	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow
Strathclyde	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Yellow
Tayside	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Yellow
Little or no progress								
Some progress								
Good progress								

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Appendix 5. Phase 1 and 2 results

Comparison of phase 1 and phase 2 results for each of the areas reviewed in the audit (except financial aspects of modernisation, which was only included as a separate area in phase 2)



Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Scottish Fire Services

Second verification of the progress of modernisation



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ISBN 1 904651 53 4