

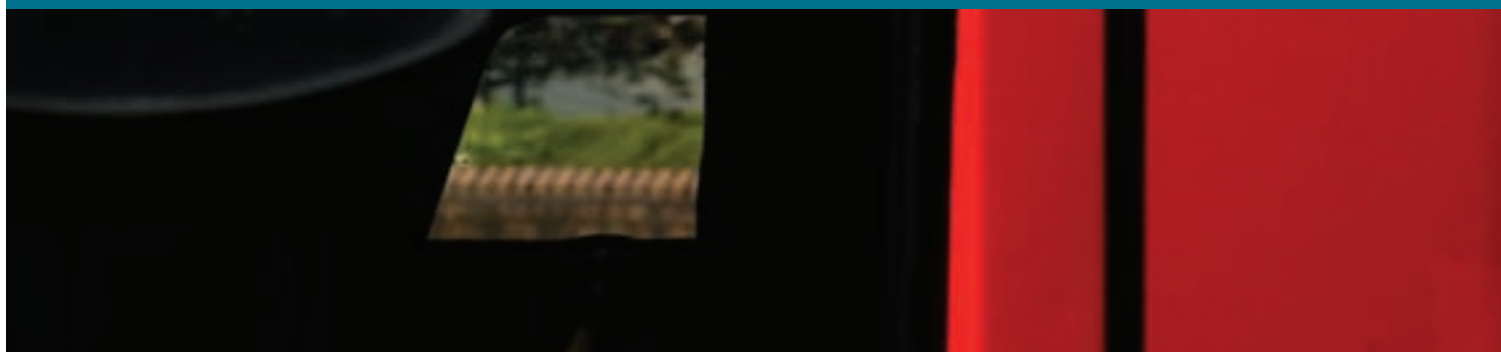
Scottish fire and rescue authorities 2007/08

Progress report



 AUDIT SCOTLAND

Prepared for the Accounts Commission
July 2008



The Accounts Commission

The Accounts Commission is a statutory, independent body which, through the audit process, assists local authorities in Scotland to achieve the highest standards of financial stewardship and the economic, efficient and effective use of their resources. The Commission has four main responsibilities:

- securing the external audit, including the audit of Best Value and Community Planning
- following up issues of concern identified through the audit, to ensure satisfactory resolutions
- carrying out national performance studies to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local government
- issuing an annual direction to local authorities which sets out the range of performance information they are required to publish.

The Commission secures the audit of 32 councils and 41 joint boards (including police and fire and rescue services). Local authorities spend over £18.9 billion of public funds a year.

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Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission. Together they ensure that the Scottish Government and public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.

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Summary



Fire and rescue authorities have made some progress in service reform since 2007 but more needs to be done to demonstrate Best Value.



Introduction

1. This report provides a summary of the progress made by fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) against our recommendations in *A review of service reform in Scottish fire and rescue authorities*, published in March 2007. While it is only a year since this report was published, it is important that the pace of change in reforming services and increasing efficiency is sustained. This review is intended to reinforce and support that process.

2. The evidence for this progress report was collected during the early part of 2008. We:

- reviewed a sample of key documents, for example, induction programmes for members and performance management reports
- analysed data submitted by FRAs
- reviewed the progress reported by FRAs against the improvement agendas identified in their local audit reports
- interviewed chief fire officers (CFOs) and FRA conveners.

Progress summary

3. Overall, we found FRAs have made progress in a number of areas, namely:

- implementing initiatives to increase the engagement of elected members, which has resulted in greater awareness of their responsibilities around governance and scrutiny
- taking a more strategic approach to partnership work, with more partnership registers and a more proactive role in Community Planning partnerships
- continuing to prioritise resources into community safety and fire prevention, within the context of their Integrated Risk Management

Plans (IRMPs). Programmes of home fire safety visits (HFSVs) are increasingly targeted at high-risk groups, and are better managed and recorded, but progress varies and some FRAs are finding it difficult to sustain previous levels of activity

- developing personal appraisal systems for staff and implementing the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) for retained staff, although in some authorities not all of these staff have full access to the Firefighter Development Programme or training records system

- taking positive steps to achieve a more diverse workforce and updating policies to reflect equalities issues.

4. However, there has been slower progress in other areas. In particular:

- evaluating the impact, outcomes and cost-effectiveness of community safety activities
- developing comprehensive performance management arrangements and using these to drive improvement activity

- providing robust evidence to demonstrate whether efficiency savings are being delivered

- public reporting arrangements still have some way to go before meeting statutory Best Value guidance on public performance reporting.

5. In some areas, it is too soon to assess the impact of the work being done by the FRAs, but there is a need to maintain momentum and monitor progress:

- FRAs must continue to improve the training and development for elected members to support the focus on strategic matters and ensure these meet members' needs.

- While most FRAs have reviewed their governance arrangements to address new requirements, these now need to produce tangible improvements in the quality of governance and scrutiny.

- There is some evidence that the increased emphasis on prevention is having an impact, with a sustained reduction in primary fires, down 17 per cent between 2003/04 and 2006/07, and fewer accidental dwelling fires ([Exhibit 1, page 5](#)). But casualty figures have remained static since 2003/04 ([Exhibit 2, page 5](#)) and secondary fires (for example, piles of rubbish on open ground) have increased by 18 per cent between 2004/05 and 2006/07.¹

- It will take time for the work being undertaken to deliver improvements in diversity and equality and FRAs must maintain their efforts in this area.

6. A more detailed account of progress is given in [Part 1 \(page 6\)](#).

The changing context for FRAs and challenges for the future

7. Following the May 2007 elections, a new relationship between central and local government was agreed which led to a concordat being signed between COSLA and the Scottish Government in the autumn of 2007. This gives councils more flexibility in how they spend money and provide services in return for clear commitments to achieve outcomes that relate to national policies. This will be captured in a Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) between the Scottish Government and each council.

8. So far, these new arrangements have focused on the relationship between individual local authorities and the Scottish Government. The implications for joint boards, which encompass a number of local authorities, all of whom will have separate SOAs, have still to be fully

explored. FRAs have expressed some concerns about SOAs:

- How joint boards will fit into the future development of SOAs as they are extended to Community Planning partnerships from 2009.
- Financing levels from constituent authorities, if funding arrangements become more closely linked to SOAs.
- Possible tensions between national outcome indicators for fire and rescue services and outcomes agreed through SOAs, and between different SOAs within one board area.

9. FRAs also express concern that the removal of ring-fenced funding has resulted in uncertainty around the continuation of Grant-Aided Expenditure (GAE) as a method of establishing indicative funding levels for fire and rescue services. This is likely to increase pressure on FRAs to justify their funding requests through a needs-based budget. This is a particular issue for joint boards, where the funding comes from the constituent local authorities and is generally based on contribution levels indicated in the GAE formula.

10. The changes in the relationships between national and local government also raise the question of whether the existing ministerial advisory structure needs to be reviewed.² The concordat states that the Scottish Government and local government, through COSLA, will work together to develop policy areas where local government has a key interest and agree resource issues related to these policy areas. It is not clear how joint boards fit into these new arrangements or what roles the existing ministerial advisory

structure and the Fire Interest Task Group (FITG)³ should now play. It is important that there are clear arrangements for ensuring that the interests of fire and rescue services are properly considered within the overall discussions between central and local government on local authority policy developments.

National performance information

11. The move to a more outcomes-focused performance management framework for local government will increase pressure on FRAs to demonstrate the impact of their preventative work and that they are delivering efficient and effective services.

12. Currently, there is no coherent national approach to collecting and reporting performance information relating to fire and rescue services. Different performance measures against different timescales are collected and reported on by, for example:

- The Scottish Fire and Rescue Advisory Unit (SFRAU).
- The Chief Fire Officers Association of Scotland (CFOAS) through the Performance Indicators Framework.
- The Accounts Commission through statutory performance indicators.
- The Scottish Government through the Criminal Justice Series on Fire Statistics Scotland.

13. Performance indicators are only a tool to assist organisations track progress in achieving strategic objectives. None of the performance information listed above is clearly set within the strategic context for Scottish FRAs. There needs to be

a more consistent and coherent approach to collecting and managing performance information to track progress against desired national outcomes, promote more informed decision-making, drive improvements in FRAs and improve benchmarking. COSLA, CFOAS and the Scottish Government should work together to address this as a matter of urgency.

14. The Scottish Government is currently undertaking a review of the statutory framework for fire and rescue services. This provides an opportunity to develop a more comprehensive and robust approach to performance information, possibly similar to the Scottish Policing Performance Framework, to support the new statutory framework.

Next steps

15. This report has focused on the elements of Best Value highlighted in the 2007 report. However, Best Value has a range of features that includes effective performance management and planning, increased public reporting and accountability, responsiveness to customers and citizens, and important leadership and scrutiny roles for elected members. In general, the approaches taken by FRAs are not as far developed as those in councils and they need to ensure they make progress against all the elements of Best Value at a pace that recognises this gap. The Commission expects FRAs to consider and act on the findings in this review and put in place the improvements required to demonstrate Best Value.

16. The Accounts Commission intends to implement its responsibilities (under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003) for reporting on whether FRAs are meeting their

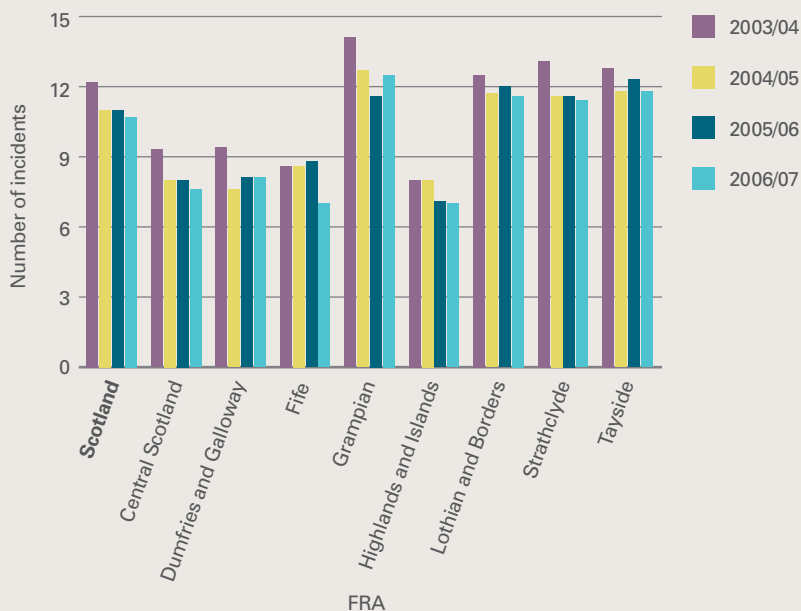
² The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 replaced the old Scottish Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council (SCFBAC) with a new three-group advisory structure – the Ministerial Advisory group, the Strategic Advisory Forum and the Service Delivery Advisory Forum. This is commonly referred to as the ministerial advisory structure.

³ The Fire Interest Task Group was established by COSLA and comprises the eight FRA conveners and the eight chief fire officers.

statutory duties by carrying out audits of Best Value. This progress report will assist the Commission develop its approach to these audits. This will be carried out as part of the work being done to develop the next round of Best Value audits in councils and within the context of the new scrutiny arrangements stemming from the Crerar review of audit and inspection arrangements in Scotland.⁴ Through these audits, the Accounts Commission will examine the progress of individual FRAs in achieving Best Value. We have identified where increased momentum is required in [Part 2 \(page 18\)](#).

Exhibit 1

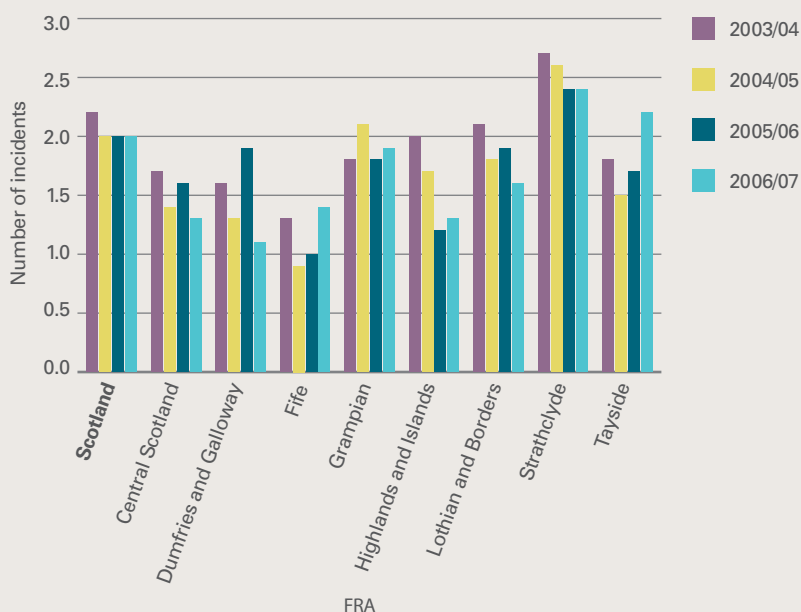
Number of accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 population



Source: Audit Scotland

Exhibit 2

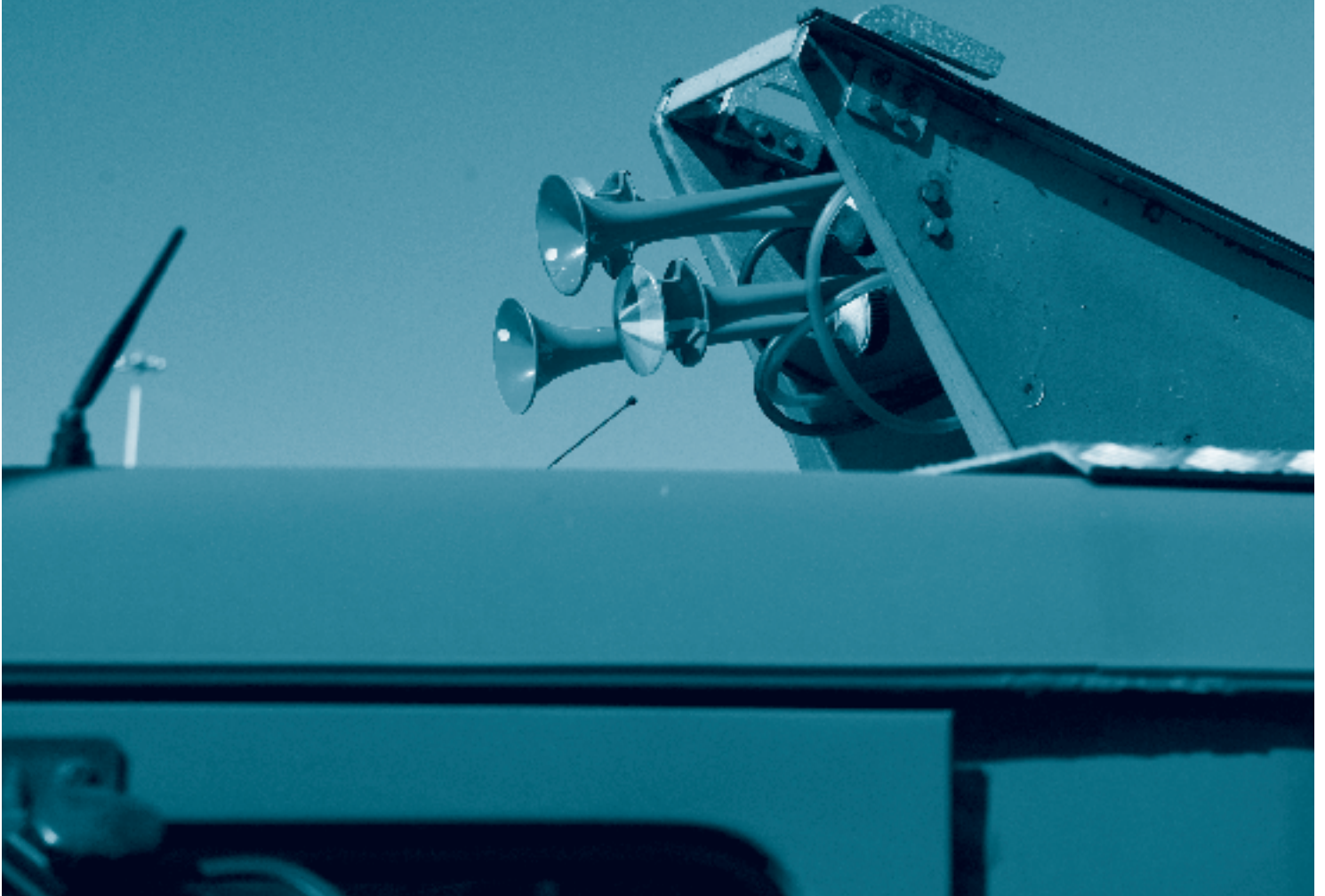
Number of incidents resulting in casualties per 10,000 population



Source: Audit Scotland

4 The Crerar Review, *The report of the independent review of regulation, audit, inspection and complaints handling of public services in Scotland*, Scottish Government, September 2007.

Part 1. Progress



This section highlights the progress made by Scottish fire and rescue authorities against our previous recommendations.



The following tables give a national overview of the progress made by FRAs against the recommendations in the 2007 report *A Review of service reform in Scottish fire and rescue authorities*.

These recommendations covered the following areas:

- Leadership and governance
- Prevention and risk management
- Financial and performance management
- Workforce management
- Diversity and equality.

Leadership and governance

The 2007 report *A Review of service reform in Scottish fire and rescue authorities* found that elected members were not meeting their statutory duties in relation to Best Value. To address this, the report recommended that FRAs should explore the potential for elected members to champion specific initiatives related to service reform, ensure that board and committee structures are appropriate, and progress a training needs analysis (TNA) of elected members.

Progress

- The local government elections in May 2007 resulted in a significant intake of new members to FRAs. Seventy-three per cent of members, including all eight conveners, are new to their role on the FRA, and of these, 64 per cent are newly elected councillors. While there is evidence of a renewed sense of enthusiasm and engagement, it is taking time for new members to get up to speed with their strategic role.
- FRAs have implemented a number of initiatives to address the recommendations in the report. Overall, Central Scotland, Fife, Highlands and Islands and Tayside have taken a more proactive approach to improving governance arrangements. In relation to the report's recommendations we found that:
 - Central Scotland has made changes to committee workings (see example), ran a strategic training session (see example), is applying a TNA and has continued developing champions for specific areas of service reform.
 - Dumfries and Galloway developed proposals to introduce committee changes which were awaiting committee consideration, is applying a TNA and will make a decision on champions as part of the wider review of governance arrangements.
 - Fife substantially reduced the size of the committee to increase responsibility, is applying a TNA, and has adopted champions.
 - Grampian developed proposals to alter committee workings which were awaiting committee consideration, has not yet put a TNA in place, and has decided against adopting champions.
 - Highlands and Islands has continued with established subcommittees, member/officer working groups and champions, and is applying a TNA.
 - Lothian and Borders has continued with established committee structures, is identifying members' development needs through the ongoing work of the board, and has decided not to adopt champions. The board undertook a major review of the Service Improvement Plan.
 - Strathclyde is waiting for the board to get up to speed before undertaking a full review of committee structures, but it has increased membership of the Performance and Audit subcommittee and established a member/staff consultative forum. It has not put a TNA in place or adopted champions.
 - Tayside has introduced new structures under the board (see example), is identifying members' development needs through the ongoing work of the board, and developing champions through the new structures.
- While these changes have still to bed in, there are positive signs that implementing these initiatives and clarifying the business of the board or committee and subcommittees have led to improvements in members' awareness of their responsibilities.
- There is evidence to suggest that some members are not always clear on the distinction between operational matters and their strategic responsibilities. This is an important area, which requires clarity and a shared understanding of the different roles of members and officers.
- Ensuring members attend scheduled training events continues to be a challenge in some areas. In Central Scotland, Dumfries and Galloway, Grampian and Lothian and Borders participation rates in training events are 80-100 per cent. However, in Fife, Highlands and Islands and Tayside less than two-thirds of FRA members had participated in training sessions, and in Strathclyde, only a quarter.
- Nationally, COSLA through the FITG produced a paper on governance and members' responsibilities in relation to Best Value, which has provided a useful focus for FRAs to evaluate their arrangements.
- CFOAS organised the first national conference for Scottish fire and rescue services in November 2007, bringing together elected members, senior managers from FRAs and other stakeholders to build a shared understanding of the strategic issues facing the fire and rescue services in Scotland.

Supporting evidence and examples

- Our review of induction programmes found these tended to focus on describing how services are delivered rather than members' strategic responsibilities. **Central Scotland, Dumfries and Galloway, Grampian, Highlands and Islands** and **Tayside** all provided some good examples of induction materials. Examples of this better practice included:
 - comprehensive information covering the authority's vision and strategic direction
 - bespoke documents outlining national and local accountability structures, statutory responsibilities, current issues of the service and the modernisation agenda
 - overviews to members of their role in performance management and scrutiny
 - personal development plans for elected members
 - reporting attendance at training events alongside other member reporting on expenses and payments.
- **Central Scotland** ran a training session for elected members, which helped clarify the difference between strategic and operational issues. This outlined the Best Value duties of members, highlighted some significant findings from local authority Best Value audit reports so far, and then focused discussion on how the joint board would stand up to a Best Value audit, for example:
 - Does our board offer vision and leadership to our service?
 - Do we all take an area-wide, strategic overview or do we tend to mainly represent our own local interests?
 - Do we scrutinise our service's priorities and strategy?
 - Do we scrutinise our service's performance?
- **Tayside** has established two member/officer forums to mirror the objectives in Tayside's strategic plan – the Service Delivery Forum (covering objectives of Prevention and Intervention) and Service Support Forum (covering objectives of People and Performance). Expected improvements include members taking forward the strategic plan, improved relations between vice-conveners and heads of departments, and broader shouldering of responsibility for the board.
- In **Central Scotland**, the business of the board has been divided between the Resources and Joint Consultative Committee (incorporating the previous IRMP working group) and the Best Value and Scrutiny committee. The code of governance, standing orders and scrutiny arrangements have all been redefined and agreed with the incoming board.

Prevention and risk management

The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 created new duties for FRAs to promote fire safety and help create safer communities. The 2007 report *A Review of service reform in Scottish fire and rescue authorities* found that progress was being made in this area but, overall, a more strategic approach could be adopted. In particular, the report recommended that FRAs should do more to evaluate systematically the effectiveness of community safety activities, develop a more strategic approach to partnership working, making greater use of partnership registers and developing ways to evaluate individual partnerships, and ensure that HFSVs were rolled out on a more comprehensive basis.

Progress

Evaluation of community safety work

- FRAs are continuing to engage in a wide range of community safety activities within the context of their IRMPs. However, systematic evaluation of this work is limited.
- While there are some good examples of evaluating individual community safety projects, often through reporting arrangements for local community safety partnerships, overall, there is a lack of robust outcomes-based performance information linked to the resources used to achieve those outcomes.
- There is limited reporting of community safety work in performance reports to the FRA, and where it is included, it tends to be descriptive and focused on inputs (eg, counting participant numbers or describing activities), rather than evaluative.
- A clearer commitment to deploying the full range of staff to take forward community safety work can be seen when it is written into operational plans, down to station level. In addition to using operational firefighters for community safety work, there is a place for specialist staff to take forward more complex activity.

Partnership working

- FRAs have made progress in taking a more strategic approach to their partnership work. They are taking a more proactive role within strategic local partnerships to ensure that local Community Planning partnerships recognise the contribution they can make to achieving the Scottish Government's outcome of 'Living our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger'.
- Six FRAs now have partnership registers. The other two (Fife and Lothian and Borders) have plans to develop registers in the near future.
- FRAs have a clear sense of the importance of partnership working in engaging with the hard-to-reach and hard-to-influence groups, who tend to be at higher risk, eg through working with alcohol and substance misuse groups.

Home fire safety visits

- FRAs are continuing their programmes of HFSVs and have improved their monitoring and recording of these. However, the rate of progress varies and some authorities are finding it difficult to sustain the levels of activity achieved in 2006/07 (**Exhibit 3**).
- While FRAs are continuing to target their HFSVs and wider community safety activity at higher-risk groups, covering both high-risk geographical areas and more vulnerable groups in society, most have yet to fully evaluate the impact of their HFSV work. However, Central Scotland, Dumfries and Galloway and Lothian and Borders have plans to start profiling the damage from fires in an area against whether an HFSV has taken place.
- More retained staff have been trained in conducting HFSVs, however, training is not the only barrier to retained staff undertaking HFSVs, and FRAs need to ensure that resources are properly allocated to enable retained staff to take forward community safety work.

Supporting evidence and examples

- **Strathclyde** is currently piloting a version of an evaluation toolkit produced by the Performance Improvement Network, a UK fire service networking organisation, designed to assist the authority in its evaluation of community safety work.
- **Fife Community Safety Partnership** analysed the impact of the antisocial behaviour interventions delivered by the partnership. These included the youth diversion programme DiversiFIRE, which found it had contributed to a 16 per cent decrease in deliberately set secondary fires across Fife.
- **Tayside** is developing community impact assessments, which analyse the community safety incidents within a locality and propose actions and responsibilities for addressing these.
- **Strathclyde** has compiled a strategic assessment for 2008-09, analysing the current trends in fire and rescue service activities, and emphasising the social issues which their partners are also attempting to address, such as antisocial behaviour, road traffic collisions and promoting positive behaviour in young people.
- **Highlands and Islands** has introduced six community safety advocates to support the delivery of community fire safety work throughout the authority. Benefits include:
 - developing new partnerships in each area to help identify those most vulnerable. This has led to removing identified risks, mobilising assistance from other agencies and, generally, improving the safety of often very vulnerable people
 - helping to change the organisational culture with a greater focus on community safety; more staff are now actively involved in community fire safety activities and there is improved quality and consistency in HFSVs
 - providing training, support and guidance to stations, providing quality assurance and ensuring key community safety messages are delivered.

Exhibit 3

Number of HFSVs completed

	Number of HFSVs completed			Cumulative HFSVs as a % of households in the FRA area
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2005/06 to 2007/08
Central Scotland	150	1,254	441	1.5
Dumfries and Galloway	2,100	3,772	3,413	13.8
Fife	1,893	4,936	3,976	6.8
Grampian	304	1,428	2,381	1.7
Highland and Islands	3,157	5,352	5,030	10.6
Lothian and Borders	72,000	49,880	74,476	47.5
Strathclyde	10,871	12,487	9,280	3.3
Tayside	145	638	1,506	1.3
Scotland	90,620	79,747	100,503	11.7

Note: The lack of a consistent definition for HFSVs makes it difficult to compare performance across the FRAs. For example, in Lothian and Borders, 65 per cent of HFSVs conducted in 2006/07 involved providing information only.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Financial and performance management

The 2007 report *A Review of service reform in Scottish fire and rescue authorities* found that FRAs needed to do more to explore the potential for savings in order to continue transforming services and that performance management was generally undeveloped. To address this, the report recommended that FRAs should continue in their efforts to improve the efficient use of resources, develop comprehensive performance management frameworks and ensure public performance reporting satisfies statutory requirements.

Progress

Efficiency savings

- FRAs have not yet adopted robust arrangements for evidencing efficiency savings and so cannot demonstrate systematically that proposed savings are being delivered. There is little mention of achieved efficiencies within performance reports or use of performance measures related to measuring efficiency.
- The 2007 report found that FRAs were at different stages in identifying efficiency savings through the budget setting process. Since then FRAs have made progress in identifying further areas where efficiencies could be made, for example, through reviewing duty systems, or specific service or support areas, such as mobile communications or fleet.
- CFOAS has been considering how best to demonstrate efficiency savings and will be adopting the COSLA/ Improvement Service guidance, which advises efficiencies achieved by joint boards should be incorporated into local authority efficiency statements for 2007/08.
- FRAs are continuing their efforts to reduce the costs of responding to automatic fire alarms (AFAs), both by reducing the level of emergency response and by trying to reduce the incidence of false alarms. Measures to reduce the overall numbers of AFAs include targeting the worst offenders to encourage them to improve their systems.
- FRAs report that these measures are successful, but the impact on AFA call-outs is to some extent negated by increasing levels of alarm installation in new-build and redevelopment programmes.
- The total number of false alarms attended in Scotland as a result of faulty apparatus has fallen, from 33,150 in 2004/05 to 30,300 in 2006/07, although the number increased in Central Scotland and Tayside. While the number of AFAs attended as a proportion of all incidents is falling, they still account for over a quarter of all incidents (**Exhibit 4**). Reducing this demand is a continuing challenge for FRAs.

Performance management and public reporting

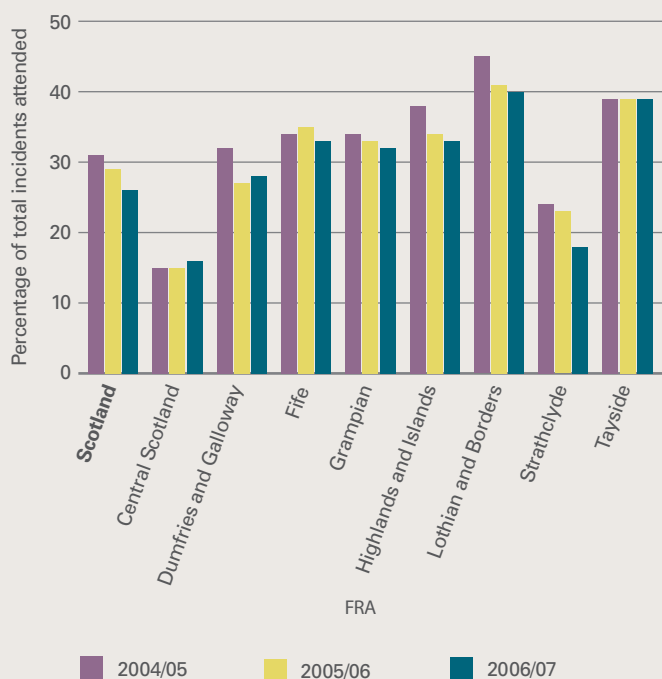
- Although FRAs have made some progress in developing their performance management arrangements, there is still room for improvement.
- Until recently, only Lothian and Borders had adopted a systematic approach to managing improvement, using the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model. Strathclyde and Lothian and Borders are both now involved in Phase One of the roll-out of the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) to identify and prioritise areas for service improvement.
- Overall, public performance reporting is improving, but there is still a tendency for reports to focus too much on positive performance rather than reporting a balanced picture.
- At a national level, CFOAS has agreed a new Performance Indicators Framework, building on the work done to develop local performance indicators reported in the 2007 report. Performance information against these indicators is due to be collected from 1 April 2008.

Supporting evidence and examples

- Examples of efficiency savings:
 - **Strathclyde** has identified efficiency savings of £0.934 million for 2007/08 and £2.343 million for 2008/09, mostly as a result of reductions in medical retivals and non-filling of vacancies pending Best Value reviews. This builds on previous efficiencies resulting in redeploying personnel into training and community safety.
 - **Tayside** identified £2.2 million efficiency savings for 2006/07, including cash-releasing savings from the introduction of rescue pumps and predetermined alarm attendance, and non-cash releasing savings from more effective work routines and redeployment of staff.
- In our review of performance reports, both for senior management and for boards and committees, we identified a number of common weaknesses:
 - a focus on performance indicators by themselves, without linking performance to achievement of strategic objectives or operational standards
 - a general lack of analysis and contextual information to explain performance trends and promote informed scrutiny
 - strategic monitoring reports for senior management not always feeding into board or committee scrutiny arrangements
 - an emphasis on activity levels and statutory performance indicators, rather than a more rounded picture of performance results, with often only a minimal focus on community safety or partnership work
 - little comparative performance information or benchmarking with other authorities.

Exhibit 4

Proportion of incidents attended which were false alarms as a result of faulty apparatus



Source: Her Majesty's Fire Inspectorate for Scotland

Workforce management

The 2007 report *A Review of service reform in Scottish fire and rescue authorities* found that FRAs had made good progress in implementing IPDS for wholetime operational staff, but more needed to be done to roll this out to retained and volunteer firefighters. In addition, more progress was needed in introducing personal appraisal systems across all FRAs. In particular, the report recommended that FRAs should ensure that retained and volunteer staff get the full benefit of available training opportunities (through supporting the continued implementation of IPDS to these staff), implement personal appraisal systems and integrate these with IPDS, do more to identify and meet the training and development needs of non-uniformed staff and further develop flexible working for firefighters, in particular, in relation to duty systems and part-time working.

Progress

- FRAs have made progress in implementing IPDS, although some retained and volunteer staff still do not have access to the Firefighter Development Programme or the electronic personal development records system (PDRpro).
- Five FRAs have fully implemented the Firefighter Development Programme for retained staff. Two authorities (Dumfries and Galloway and Tayside) have fully implemented PDRPro for retained staff (**Exhibit 5**). The others have plans for rolling these systems out to all their staff.
- All FRAs are now developing a personal appraisal system covering all their grades of staff, but are at different stages in rolling this out. Dumfries and Galloway and Strathclyde have rolled out their personal appraisal system to all staff; the other authorities have still to reach some groups of staff. Fife is developing a 360° online appraisal tool for all staff.
- FRAs are intending to include the training and development needs of non-uniformed staff within the evolving appraisal systems.
- Grampian has still to complete the full roll-out of rank to role, the move from a traditional rank-based staffing structure to one based on competence.
- FRAs are reviewing duty systems, seeking to introduce more flexible working arrangements and reviewing shift arrangements to improve efficiency. Four authorities have introduced changes to duty systems (Fife, Grampian, Lothian and Borders (see example) and Strathclyde).

Sickness absence

- Data from statutory performance indicators show that the number of rider shifts lost due to sickness absence has decreased gradually from seven per cent to six per cent between 2003/04 and 2006/07. Grampian and Tayside were the only two FRAs who showed an increase (**Exhibit 6**).

Supporting evidence and examples

Exhibit 5

Progress made by FRAs in the implementation of the two main components of IPDS to retained staff, to December 2007

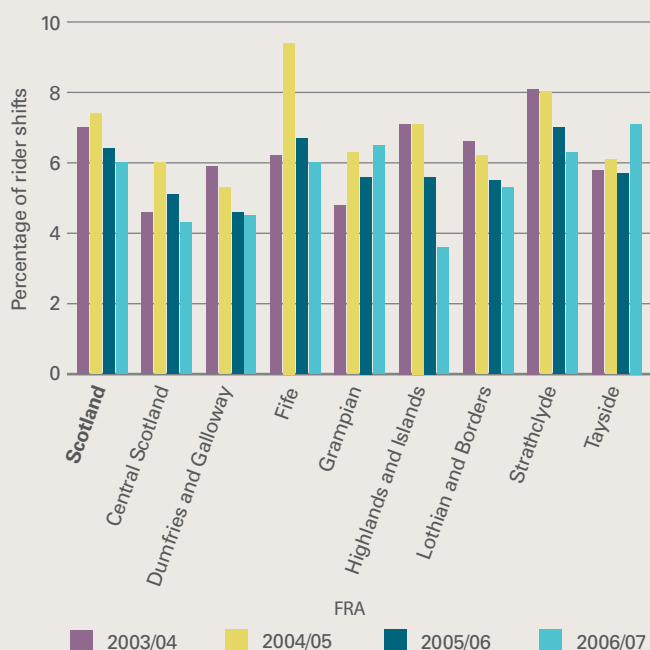
FRA	Implementation of the Firefighter Development Programme	Roll out of PDRpro
Central Scotland	Partially	Not implemented
Dumfries and Galloway	Implemented	Implemented
Fife	Implemented	Not implemented
Grampian	Implemented	Partially
Highlands and Islands	Partially	Partially
Lothian and Borders	Implemented	Not implemented
Strathclyde	Partially	Not implemented
Tayside	Implemented	Implemented

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

- **Lothian and Borders** used IRMP to identify locations throughout their area where additional personnel and other resources were needed. They have acted on this information by changing working patterns for operational staff based at wholtime fire stations, allowing a move from a 'one size fits all' system to a variety of patterns which best enables the risk in each community to be addressed.

Exhibit 6

Percentage of rider shifts lost due to sickness during the year



Source: Audit Scotland

Diversity and equality

The 2007 report *A Review of service reform in Scottish fire and rescue authorities* found the FRA workforce was not representative of the diverse communities they served and that a shift in cultural attitudes was required in order to make the significant improvements needed. The report recommended that FRAs should continue to improve their efforts to increase the diversity of the workforce, ensure they are meeting and responding to forthcoming equality legislation, continue to deliver diversity and equality training and put in place measures to evaluate the impact of this training on cultural awareness within organisations.

Progress

- FRAs are taking positive action to address diversity and equality issues, such as encouraging a more diverse workforce and conducting equality impact assessments on policies. It will take time for these efforts to lead to significant improvements.
- FRAs are making greater efforts to increase the diversity of their workforce by holding positive action initiatives to encourage under-represented groups to enter the service. This includes making links with relevant community groups, targeted advertising campaigns and specific events to encourage applications to the service.
- Figures from FRAs show an increase in women being recruited into uniformed posts, rising from 15 in 2006/07 to 39 in 2007/08. There has been less of an increase for black and minority ethnic people (BME), from four in 2006/07 to ten in 2007/08 (although two authorities could not provide figures).
- FRAs have made some progress in responding to the requirements of equality legislation; all eight have equality schemes covering disability, gender and race, with Fife, Strathclyde and Tayside also having policies covering age, religion and belief, and sexual orientation.
- All FRAs have diversity and equality training available for all staff, although its implementation is varied across staff groups (**Exhibit 7**). However, there is as yet little evidence of plans to evaluate this training to determine whether attitudes are changing.

Supporting evidence and examples

- **Tayside** held a positive action information weekend which offered women the chance to undertake fitness coaching from the fitness/occupational health team, to help prepare them for the physical fitness tests, as analysis has shown that this is where many female applicants are lost from the recruitment process.

Exhibit 7

Percentage of staff groups who had received training in diversity and equality by March 2008

FRA	Wholetime firefighters	Retained firefighters	Volunteer/CRU firefighters	Non-uniformed staff
Central Scotland	98	98	100	96
Dumfries and Galloway	100	100	100	100
Fife	51	57	n/a	38
Grampian	88	94	n/a	12
Highlands and Islands	99	48	44	99
Lothian and Borders	68	89	n/a	60
Strathclyde	38	45	n/a	33
Tayside	87	64	100	100

Note: Strathclyde has introduced a new programme to build on previous training and is in the early stages of rolling this out.

Source: Audit Scotland fieldwork

Part 2. Next steps



This section identifies where further work is required to ensure our previous recommendations are fully implemented.



The following tables identify areas where further work is required to ensure the recommendations from the 2007 report *A review of service reform in Scottish fire and rescue authorities* are fully implemented. We have also identified areas which are linked to Best Value characteristics and therefore likely to be covered in future audits of Best Value and Community Planning undertaken in FRAs.

Leadership and governance

- Initiatives aimed at supporting members fulfil their statutory duties have still to bed in and increased momentum is required to ensure these result in tangible improvements to governance and scrutiny.
- In joint boards, FRAs should explore the potential of using the skills and experience of constituent local authorities when developing training and induction programmes for members, in particular in relation to members' governance and scrutiny responsibilities.
- Where a systematic approach to the training and development of members, which recognises their individual needs, is not in place, FRAs should improve their arrangements. Although training requirements can be identified through committee business or via a TNA, there should be a robust system to ensure proper support for members. FRAs should ensure that members are effectively engaged in the design of training and development programmes and in monitoring whether their needs are being met.
- Joint boards must focus on the best decision for the FRA, over and above constituent authority concerns. This can be particularly challenging when there are local concerns, for example, moving or closing a fire station. The role of convener is especially important in ensuring this focus.
- Effective leadership and sound governance arrangements, from both elected members and senior officers, is a Best Value characteristic and will be evaluated in more detail when Best Value audits are introduced into FRAs.

Prevention and risk management

- FRAs need to improve the systematic evaluation of their community safety work, ensuring outcomes achieved and reported through community safety partnerships feed into a comprehensive analysis of the range of preventative work, in order to demonstrate the most effective use of the resources available.
 - FRAs need to ensure they continue to work strategically with their Community Planning partners to achieve the Scottish Government's national outcome of 'Living our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger'.
 - Partnership registers are only a mechanism to help FRAs manage their partnership activity, and outcomes of partnership working need to feature more strongly in performance reports.
 - Community Planning and joint working are key characteristics of Best Value. Progress in these areas will be evaluated in more detail when Best Value audits are introduced into FRAs.
- Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 brought in new responsibilities in October 2006 for property owners to ensure the safety of people in their workplace or other non-domestic premises, in the event of a fire. FRAs are responsible for enforcing these new responsibilities and ensuring property owners are adequately fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. The impact of these new duties is dependent on the quality of the self-assessment of fire risks that comes from property owners, and the resulting follow-up required if the quality is poor. It is still too early to determine whether FRAs are meeting demands in this area or to assess the impact of their programmes of audit to test compliance.

Financial and performance management

- Local authorities face continuing and substantial demands on their financial resources, and FRAs will need to do more to show that the efficiency savings identified through reviews or as part of the budget process are delivered. FRAs need to feed these into reporting arrangements for efficiency statements.
- While there are informal arrangements for sharing good practice around procurement, the opportunity provided by the CFOAS procurement subgroup to take a more proactive approach in identifying procurement opportunities should be fully exploited.
- Shared services are a key part of the efficiency agenda across the public sector, and while there have been some developments in this area, there is scope for FRAs to explore the potential for further efficiencies through this approach. The CFOAS performance indicator framework proposes applying indicators put forward by the UK Public Sector Audit Agencies for evaluating value for money in public sector corporate services. This would be a useful starting point to determine where opportunities exist for moving to shared services.
- FRAs need to improve performance management arrangements. Performance management needs to be embedded at all levels of management, down to station and watch level, and senior management and members of boards and committees need to ensure performance information is used to drive improvement activity. This will be evaluated in greater depth through Best Value audits of FRAs.
- FRAs could do more to ensure they are complying fully with the Best Value Guidance on Measures to Support Public Performance Reporting, which supports the duty on public reporting laid out in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Workforce management

- FRAs need to ensure personal appraisal systems become embedded within their organisational culture and that robust systems are in place to assess whether anticipated benefits are delivered.
- FRAs should ensure development opportunities extend to all staff, particularly retained, Community Response Unit staff and non-uniformed staff.
- Training is not the only barrier to retained staff undertaking further duties in preventative work; improved planning around the use of retained staff would help to fulfil potential in this area.
- Making the best use of public resources, including employees, is a Best Value characteristic and FRAs should ensure they have strategies in place to deliver effective people management and organisational development.

Diversity and equality

- Responding to the diversity and equality agenda requires a long-term approach to determine whether specific initiatives result in sustained change.
- FRAs must ensure they maintain momentum in relation to diversity and equality, both in relation to their workforce and in service delivery.
- FRAs should continue to review their initiatives or conduct cultural audit exercises to determine whether attitudes to diversity and equality are changing.
- Equal opportunities is a Best Value characteristics and further progress against this will be evaluated in greater depth through Best Value audits of FRAs.

Scottish fire and rescue authorities 2007/08

Progress report

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