



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Performance &amp; Resources Board</b>	<b>Agenda no.</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> June 2023</b>		
<b>Report Authors:</b>	<b>Sarah Ramos, Interim Head of Employment Policy &amp; Practice Martin Jones, Workforce Analytics Lead</b>		
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Colette Black, Director of People Services</b>		
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Annual Workforce Report 2022-23</b>		
<b>Type of Report:</b>	<b>Information</b>		
<b>Action Point No.</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>For Publication</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>

## 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Performance and Resources Board (P&R Board) are asked to note the contents of the report. This paper provides an overview for the P&R Board on the Service's workforce for the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

## 3. BACKGROUND

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

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

Where reference is made to national statistics the source is Fire and Rescue Workforce and Pension Statistics: [Fire and rescue workforce and pensions statistics: England, April 2020 to March 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fire-and-rescue-workforce-and-pensions-statistics-england-april-2020-to-march-2021)

Please see Appendix for further detailed Workforce Demographics data.

## **4. OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS – ACTION BEING TAKEN**

### **4.1. Workforce Demographic Action**

Whilst the Service's workforce demographics are broadly comparable to the national picture for fire and rescue services in England, there is still more we need to do. Table 2 – 8 in the Appendix provides information on five diversity characteristics – Age (Table 2 and Table 3), Gender/Sex (Table 4 and Table 5), Ethnicity (Table 6), Disability (Table 7) and Sexual Orientation (Table 8).

In our People Strategy 2020-24 we gave a commitment to reviewing our recruitment approaches and assessment and selection methodology. Fairness, inclusion and diversity was a strong thread through these commitments. We have worked within our agreed policy review framework to ensure our pre-employment, recruitment and resourcing policies and practices continue to be consistent, transparent and inclusive, and that they build on good practice as noted from the NFCC maturity model frameworks and the NFCC policy products.

We continue to develop and implement inclusive and diverse ways to assess all candidates for vacancies including developing training, guidance and toolkits that support consistent and effective recruitment assessment e.g., unconscious bias, process maps and assessor toolkits. Additionally, we have made changes to our assessment centres to support neuro-divergent needs.

Our new recruitment policy was launched in December 2022, with a clear focus on ensuring and promoting diversity and inclusion. Examples of inclusivity and positive action include gender decoding adverts, blind sifting and shortlisting, operational and non-operational members on selection panels, neurodiversity work with Colchester Institute and disability confident employer status. The SAFER recruitment audit was undertaken in Spring 2023 and there are internal crosschecks in place to ensure pre-employment requirements are met. SAFER recruitment training will be a focus for this coming year.

Nationally the number and proportion of female firefighters has slowly increased to 7.5 per cent in 2021 (most recent numbers). The Service has been continuing the commitment to increasing gender diversity. As of 31 March 2023, 5.3 per cent of firefighting personnel (i.e., Wholetime and On Call combined) of recorded gender were female.

As of 31 March 2023, 2.9 per cent of firefighting personnel (i.e., Wholetime and On Call combined) of recorded ethnicity identified as a non-white, ethnic minority. Our drive to encourage colleagues to declare self-classification diversity data has shown a reduction in the number of not recorded records for ethnicity and sexual orientation.

The overall age profile has moved back up an age banding, with the majority of employees now in the 46-55 band; which further demonstrates that our positive action focus is still required. The age profile in Support has moved down an age category, which is associated with a number of retirements. The average age of all firefighting personnel (i.e. Wholetime and On Call combined) on 31 March 2023 was 40.5 years.

For more detailed information regarding our inclusion and diversity activities over the past year, please refer to the Inclusion and Equality Report (link attached).

## 4.2. Turnover Actions

Table 13 in the Appendix details our workforce turnover by employee group. Turnover rates remain healthy but have increased again expect for in Wholetime firefighters. Whilst leaver data provides some insights, it is the exit interviews and questionnaire where we are able to gain a better understanding to inform what actions may be required. When colleagues leave the Service, they are invited to complete an exit interview questionnaire. This is optional, but we encourage colleagues to take up this opportunity in order to gain a better understanding of the drivers for our turnover and identify any interventions which may be required.

46 online exit interview submissions were received in 2022/23, reflecting 23.8% of all leavers during the period. (No change for 2021/22). Response rates were as follows:

Employee Group	Leavers	Exit Interview Submissions	Response Rate
Wholetime	47	12	25.5%
On-Call	102	12	11.8%
Control	3	2	66.7%
Support	41	20	48.8%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>23.8%</b>

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

Primary reasons for leaving were recorded in exit interviews as:

- Wholetime: 33.3% of all leavers were retiring to take their full pension. A further 25.0% indicated that they were leaving to join another fire and rescue service.
- On Call: 50.0% left for personal reasons (including/work life balance). A further 16.7% left for unspecified reasons.
- One Control respondent retired early, while the other left for unspecified reasons.
- Support: 35.0% were leaving to take up alternative employment. A further 20.0% indicated that they were leaving to draw their full pension.

Across all employee groups, 73.3% (58.5% in 2021/22) of all exit questionnaire respondents indicated that they would return to the Service should a suitable opportunity present itself.

Employee Group	“I would return to the service for the right opportunity”
Wholetime	83.3%
On-Call	75.0%
Control	100%
Support	67.6%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>73.3%</b>

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

**4.3. Absence Actions**

Following the launch of the new Absence Policy last year, we have been proactively supporting absence case management as part of the wider attendance management agenda. The People Partners continue to coach managers and Hydra training, including a focus on attendance, has been run for newly promoted Watch Managers. The HR team continues to review cases on a weekly basis to ensure that referrals to Occupational Health are happening on a timely basis and to ensure managers’ support.

Overall, our absence rates have reduced significantly (as outlined in Table 17) with 3445 sickness absence days less than in 2021/2022. There has been a strong focus on supporting our colleagues back to work following any periods of sickness absence.

Our Service’s Fitness Policy was relaunched at the end of last year and the Fitness Team continue to work with individuals and their managers that are currently below the required level to mitigate risk of impacting our Service commitments.

The wellbeing element of the People Strategy 2020-24 has focused on mental and physical health, as well as financial health and social activity, healthy eating and fitness. Many of the management referrals around mental health will have been referred on for counselling or specialist trauma therapy; we have a network of counsellors and therapists across the county.

#### **4.4. Employee Relations Actions**

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

Within the Annual Plan, one of the goals is to “Build our Service Employee Relations capability – “raise the bar on ER” to support our ambitions for continuous improvement and fair culture.” During Quarter 3 and 4, an external consultant was appointed to undertake a review of four key Employee Relations areas: Attendance, Disciplinary, Grievance and Performance Management, undertaking an informal audit of cases and providing recommendations for improvements. The focus of these was on ensuring a more consistent approach across the People Partner team and anticipating customer needs by providing a clear, simple and easily accessible presentation of policy and procedure for each Employee Relation category. Final reports and feedback were delivered in Quarter 4 along with new toolkits, flowcharts and management guidance for launch by Q3 this year.

Within the Safer Together project, the development of the Safe Share scheme, along with independent audits of our ways of working and management of previous allegations have provided clarification and recommendations on areas for improvement which the team have embraced and continue to develop.

During 2022-23 we have reviewed and relaunched 9 People policies: Recruitment & Resourcing, Agency Workers, Career Break, Transitioning at work, Special Leave, Safeguarding, Grievance, Attendance and Dignity at Work.

The average time to close cases dropped from 108 days in 2021/22 to 81.8 days in 2022/23. (It should be noted that the average case duration in 2020/21 was 131 days and that the 2022/23 figure represents a drop of 37.6 across the two financial years). This reduction is a reflection on the strong focus on reducing the length of long-term sickness absence cases as well as tightening the timescales on investigations.

See Table 18 for a full breakdown of the Service’s employee relations casework during 2022/23 with comparison to the previous financial year.

#### **5. RISKS AND MITIGATIONS**

There are no additional risk management implications.

Strategic risk - SRR150005

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

Control measure - SRR150005/003

*Efficient workforce planning and recruitment procedures.*

**6. LINKS TO FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN**

As set out in the Fire and Rescue Plan

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

As well as the following Service Values

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

**7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

**8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

**9. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

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

**10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

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

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

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

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

**11. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

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

**12. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

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

**13. FUTURE PLANS**

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

## LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AND APPENDICES

### 14. APPENDIX

Table 1: Workforce Headcount / FTE					
Employee Group	31 Mar 2022		31 Mar 2023		FTE Variance
	Headcount	FTE	Headcount	FTE	
Wholetime	635	633.6	631	631.0	-2.6
On-Call	524	414.0	511	404.5	-9.5
Control	40	35.7	42	37.9	+2.2
Support	323	296.5	336	311.9	+15.4
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>1,522</b>	<b>1,379.8</b>	<b>1,520</b>	<b>1,385.3</b>	<b>+5.5</b>

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

Table 2: Age Profile				
Employee Group	Mean	Median	Min	Max
Wholetime	42.5	43.0	20	62
On-Call	38.6	37.0	18	70
Control	42.3	41.0	21	65
Support	46.9	48.0	19	74
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>42.2</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>74</b>

Based upon age at last birthday as at 31 March 2023.

Table 3: Majority Age Group				
Employee Group	31 Mar 2022		31 Mar 2023	
	Majority Group	% of Employees in Group	Majority Group	% of Employees in Group
Wholetime	46-55	38.0%	46-55	37.9%
On-Call	25-35	35.3%	25-35	34.6%
Control	36-45	32.5%	36-45	40.5%
Support	56-65	29.1%	46-55	26.2%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>36-45</b>	<b>29.3%</b>	<b>46-55</b>	<b>28.8%</b>

Table 4: Sex Distribution				
Employee Group	31 Mar 2022		31 Mar 2023	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Wholetime	92.9%	7.1%	93.0%	7.0%
On-Call	96.6%	3.4%	96.9%	3.1%
Control	15.0%	85.0%	14.3%	85.7%
Support	48.3%	51.7%	47.3%	52.7%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>82.7%</b>	<b>17.4%</b>	<b>82.0%</b>	<b>18.0%</b>

Table 5: Gender Distribution								
Employee Group	31 Mar 2022				31 Mar 2023			
	Male	Female	Other	Not Recorded	Male	Female	Other	Not Recorded
Wholetime	82.8%	6.9%	0.7%	9.6%	82.7%	6.8%	1.0%	9.5%
On-Call	89.5%	3.2%	0.4%	6.9%	91.0%	2.9%	0.6%	5.5%
Control	15.0%	85.0%	0%	0%	14.3%	85.7%	0%	0%
Support	46.7%	50.2%	0%	3.1%	45.5%	51.2%	0%	3.3%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>75.7%</b>	<b>16.9%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>75.4%</b>	<b>17.5%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>

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

Table 6: Ethnicity						
Employee Group	31 Mar 2022			31 Mar 2023		
	White <sup>1</sup>	Other <sup>2</sup>	Not Recorded	White <sup>1</sup>	Other <sup>2</sup>	Not Recorded
Wholetime	70.7%	9.3%	20.0%	73.1%	3.5%	23.5%
On-Call	71.4%	4.4%	24.2%	73.4%	2.0%	24.7%
Control	90.0%	5.0%	5.0%	92.9%	2.4%	4.8%
Support	82.7%	6.2%	11.1%	80.4%	3.6%	16.1%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>74.0%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>19.2%</b>	<b>75.3%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>21.7%</b>

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

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

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

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



Table 7: Disability				
Employee Group	31 Mar 2022		31 Mar 2023	
	Disability	Not Stated	Disability	Not Stated
Wholetime	4.1%	95.9%	3.8%	96.2%
On-Call	4.0%	96.0%	5.1%	94.9%
Control	2.5%	97.5%	2.4%	97.6%
Support	5.9%	94.1%	5.4%	94.6%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>95.6%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>95.5%</b>

Table 8: Sexual Orientation			
Employee Group	Heterosexual	LGBQ+	Not Recorded
Wholetime	56.9%	2.9%	40.3%
On-Call	56.4%	1.0%	42.7%
Control	85.7%	0%	14.3%
Support	69.6%	3.9%	26.5%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>60.3%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>37.3%</b>

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

### Workforce joiner diversity

Table 9: Workforce Joiner Sex Distribution				
Employee Group	2021-22		2022-23	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Wholetime	83.8%	16.2%	95.9%	4.1%
On-Call	92.5%	7.5%	95.5%	4.5%
Control	0%	0%	14.3%	85.7%
Support	54.5%	45.5%	45.6%	54.4%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>83.6%</b>	<b>16.4%</b>	<b>78.7%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>

Table 10: Workforce Joiner Gender Distribution								
Employee Group	2021-22				2022-23			
	Male	Female	Other	Not Recorded	Male	Female	Other	Not Recorded
Wholetime	83.8%	16.2%	0%	0%	93.9%	4.1%	0%	2.0%
On-Call	91.6%	7.5%	0%	0.9%	95.5%	4.5%	0%	0%
Control	0%	0%	0%	0%	14.3%	85.7%	0%	0%

Support	54.5%	45.5%	0%	0%	45.6%	54.4%	0%	0%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>83.1%</b>	<b>16.4%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>78.2%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>

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

Table 11: Workforce Joiner Ethnicity						
Employee Group	2021-22			2022-23		
	White <sup>1</sup>	Other <sup>2</sup>	Not Recorded	White <sup>1</sup>	Other <sup>2</sup>	Not Recorded
Wholetime	70.3%	8.1%	21.6%	73.5%	8.2%	18.4%
On-Call	69.2%	0.9%	29.9%	79.8%	5.6%	14.6%
Control	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Support	51.5%	3.0%	45.5%	56.1%	7.0%	36.8%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>66.1%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>31.1%</b>	<b>72.3%</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>

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

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

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

Table 12: Workforce Joiner Age Distribution						
Employee Group	17-24	25-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+
Wholetime	16.3%	69.4%	10.2%	4.1%	0.0%	0%
On-Call	23.6%	37.1%	24.7%	12.4%	2.2%	0%
Control	14.3%	28.6%	28.6%	28.6%	0.0%	0%
Support	7.0%	31.6%	29.8%	24.6%	7.0%	0%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>16.8%</b>	<b>43.1%</b>	<b>22.8%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>0%</b>

## TURNOVER

Table 13: Workforce Turnover		
Employee Group	2021-22	2022-23
Wholetime	7.3%	7.0%
On-Call	13.9%	16.6%
Control	2.6%	7.3%
Support	10.4%	12.8%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>10.1%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>

## Leavers

Table 14: Reasons for Leaving – 2022-23								
Employee Group	Transfer to other service	Retirement	Resignation	Redundancy	End of Contract	Dismissal	Death	Not Recorded
Wholetime	2.1%	63.8%	29.8%	0%	4.3%	0%	2.1%	0%
On-Call	0%	6.9%	92.2%	0%	1.0%	0%	0%	0%
Control	0%	33.3%	33.3%	0%	33.3%	0%	0%	0%
Support	0%	19.5%	65.9%	12.2%	0%	2.4%	0%	0%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>23.8%</b>	<b>70.5%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>0%</b>

Table 15: Length of Service at Leaving – 2022-23						
Employee Group	< 1 Year	1-3 Years	4-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-20 Years	20 Years +
Wholetime	2.1%	2.1%	0%	2.1%	23.4%	70.2%
On-Call	14.7%	42.2%	10.8%	8.8%	15.7%	7.8%
Control	33.3%	0%	0%	0%	33.3%	33.3%
Support	17.1%	29.3%	14.6%	22.0%	7.3%	9.8%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>12.4%</b>	<b>29.0%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>23.8%</b>

## Joiners/Recruitment

Table 15: Joiners		
Employee Group	2021-22	2022-23
Wholetime	37	49
On-Call	107	89
Control	0	7
Support	33	57
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>202</b>

## ABSENCE

Table 17: Sickness Absence – 2022-23			
Employee Group	Working Days Lost in 2022-23	% of Available Working Days Lost	National Absence Survey Comparison <sup>1</sup>
Wholetime	6,060.3	5.2%	8.3%
On-Call	7,751.0	6.1%	n/a <sup>2</sup>
Control	454.8	6.8%	8.1%
Support	2,835.0	3.6%	3.7%

<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>17,101.0</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	n/a
----------------	-----------------	-------------	-----

In the 2021-22 financial year, 30.7% of all recorded sickness absence was for COVID-related reasons. During 2022-23, Confirmed and Suspected COVID infections were recategorized within the category of viruses/infectious diseases.

Note 1: At the time of writing (May 2023) national FRS benchmark absence figures for the full 2022-23 financial year were unavailable, however, for the 9 months to Dec 2022, comparison absence rates were as displayed.

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



**EMPLOYEE RELATIONS**

The following table presents the Service’s employee relations casework metrics for 2022/23, compared to the same figures for the 2021/22 year.

Table 18: Casework Volumes 2022/23												
Case Type	Number of New Cases in Year			Number of Cases Closed in Year			Average Case Duration (Calendar Days)			Number of Cases Open at Year End		
	2021/22	2022/23	TREND	2021/22	2022/23	TREND	2021/22	2022/23	TREND	2021/22	2022/23	TREND
Attendance	94	99	↑	80	110	↑	112	84.8	↓	30	25	↓
Disciplinary	11	10	↓	10	13	↑	130	84.2	↓	4	1	↓
Grievance	30	10	↓	30	10	↓	58	40.0	↓	1	2	↑
Performance	38	16	↓	41	15	↓	131	91.4	↓	4	5	↑
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>↓</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>↓</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>81.8</b>	<b>↓</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>↓</b>

A new SharePoint tool was implemented during Q3 2022/23 for use by the People Partnering Team to log and track the progress of employee relations cases. Data from that tool is available to HR Managers via a Power BI dashboard, allowing them access to up-to-date information about the number and type of cases in progress.