

Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

14 July 2021

2020-21 Performance Report of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service Activity

Recommendation

That the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the contents of this report.

1.0 Summary and Conclusions

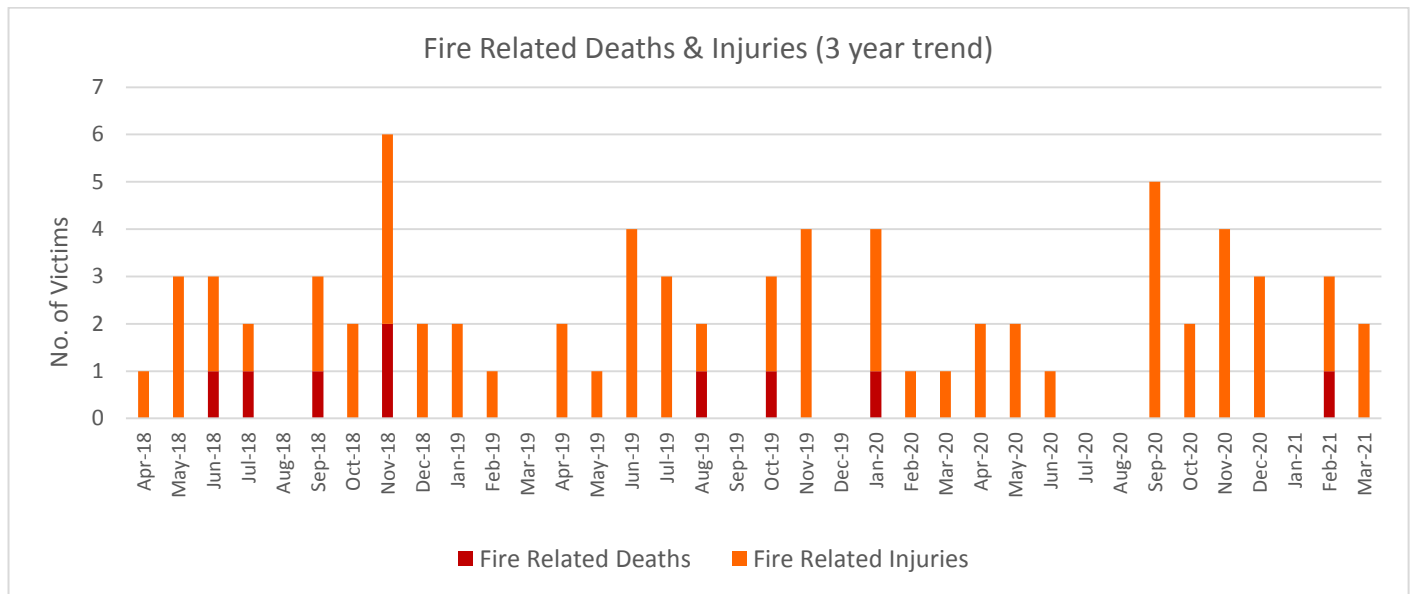
- 1.1 This report summarises the performance of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) against some of the key business measures reported on corporately. The figures have been taken from across a number of Fire and Rescue teams and aim to give a view of historical trends (over the past three years where possible) and a summary of the most recent performance for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.
- 1.2 The performance across all of the measures has been directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the incident types usually attended by firefighters have seen significant reductions in the lockdown periods which has impacted on the 2020/21 figures. Levels have slowly been increasing as restrictions have been lifted in spring 2021.
- 1.3 Positively, the number of incidents attended has reduced across all of the key areas. In particular there have been reductions in the number of fire deaths and injuries, accidental dwelling fires, deliberate fires and attended road traffic collisions. Some areas saw reductions of over one third. During the pandemic Firefighters have been actively involved in many other community based activities, for example staffing lateral flow test sites and delivering medicine and food parcels.
- 1.4 Appliance availability remains high for wholetime (97.42%) and the on-call availability figure is lower at 70.67%. Recruitment challenges impact on the on call availability figures and the figures have been affected by the pandemic when officers have returned to primary

employment.

- 1.5 The Fire Control Team have met the target of handling calls within 90 seconds on 86.8% of occasions over the last twelve months, which continues to exceed the target of 85%.
- 1.6 Community prevention activity has also been directly affected during the pandemic, where firefighters have not been able to engage with the public as they usually would. Teams have been quick to respond and adapt to new ways of working and have been conducting online Safe and Well Checks to ensure people remain safe in their homes and also have assisted with prescription drops, welfare calls and food parcel coordination.
- 1.7 There has been a significant increase in Hospital to Home activity throughout the pandemic. The Hospital to Home scheme was launched by WFRS in August 2018 and is run in partnership with Public Health, Adult Social Care and the local hospitals, and is funded by the Better Care Fund. The aim of the scheme is to support elderly and vulnerable patients who have been treated at hospital and are well enough to get back to where they feel safe and can be supported to live independently, which could be either in their own home or to a care home. The scheme has helped to reduce the number of patients who have previously had to be admitted to hospital because they had no immediate friends or family to help them get home.
- 1.8 Once home the patient is settled in by the Hospital to Home team where they will check if there are working smoke alarms present and fit new ones if required. They can also make a referral for a Safe and Well Check. Those delivering the service are not on duty and are used on a self-rostering basis. The scheme has been a big success in the county and has helped to strengthen WFRS' brand within the community, where crews are getting involved in a wide range of work keeping our communities safe. Due to the pandemic there has never been a bigger demand for this service and the number of referrals and collections is increasing month on month.
- 1.9 The service continues to monitor and track its performance with acknowledgement of the changing risk profile. Key drivers for future change in the risk profile are the effects of emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.
- 1.10 New reports are being regularly developed by the Business Intelligence team and are shared with fire personnel at all levels to assist with targeting resources more effectively and prevention work.

2.0 Key Business Measures

2.1 Fire Related Deaths and Injuries



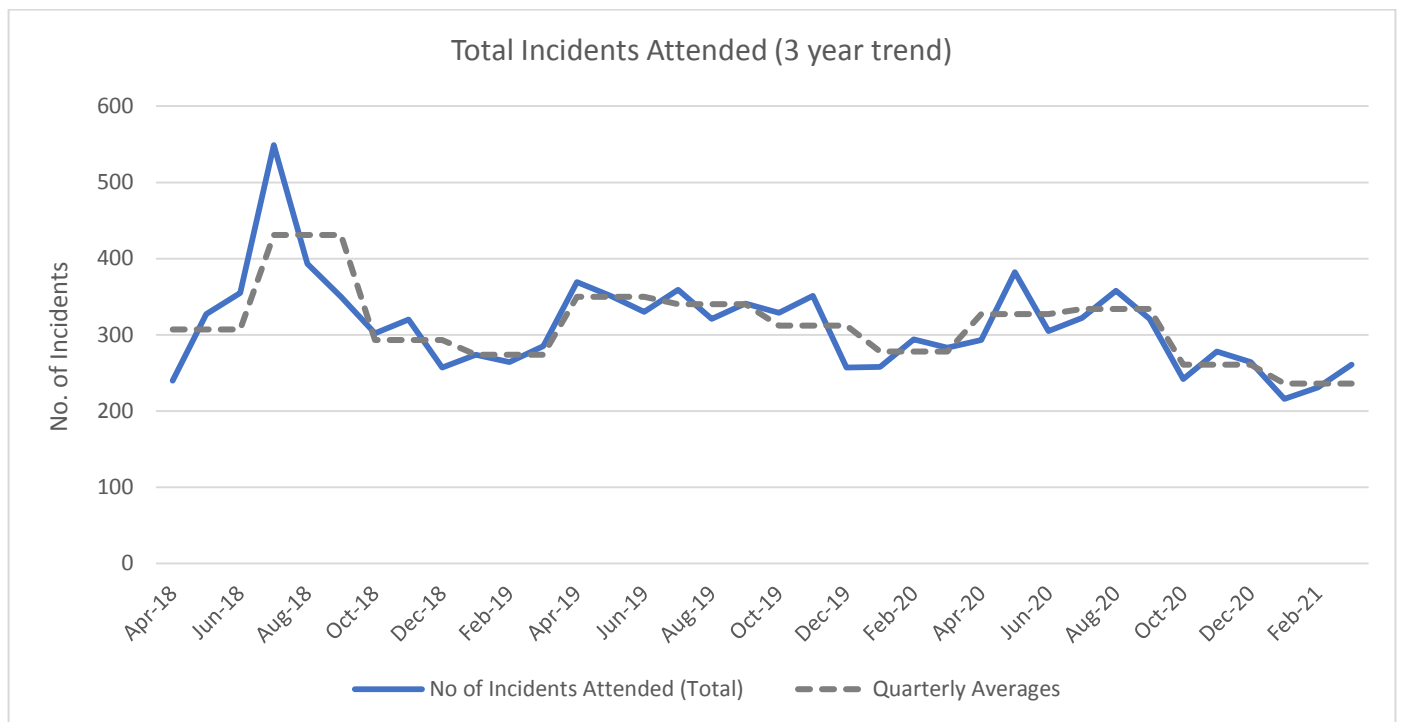
Source: Firecrest

In 2020/21 there was one fire related death recorded, which is a reduction on three recorded in the same period of 2019/20. The Coroner has yet to confirm that it was fire related and the figure will be updated once we have confirmation. In the event of a fire related death, the Service investigates in an effort to understand causes and identify any appropriate improvement activity.

In 2020/21 there were 23 fire related injuries recorded, which is an increase of one incident as compared to the 22 fire related injuries recorded in the same period of 2019/20. For the 23 victims, 13 victims were taken to hospital and 10 were given first aid at the scene. Three incidents saw victims with serious injuries.

The Service closely monitors levels and types of incidents involving fire related injuries to address any emerging issues to inform community prevention activity. Similarly, to the fire related deaths measure, the Service will continue to work with partners to better understand any causal factors (such as alcohol/drug dependency/mental health issues) in the hope of preventing similar incidents and injuries in the future.

2.2 Number of Attended Incidents



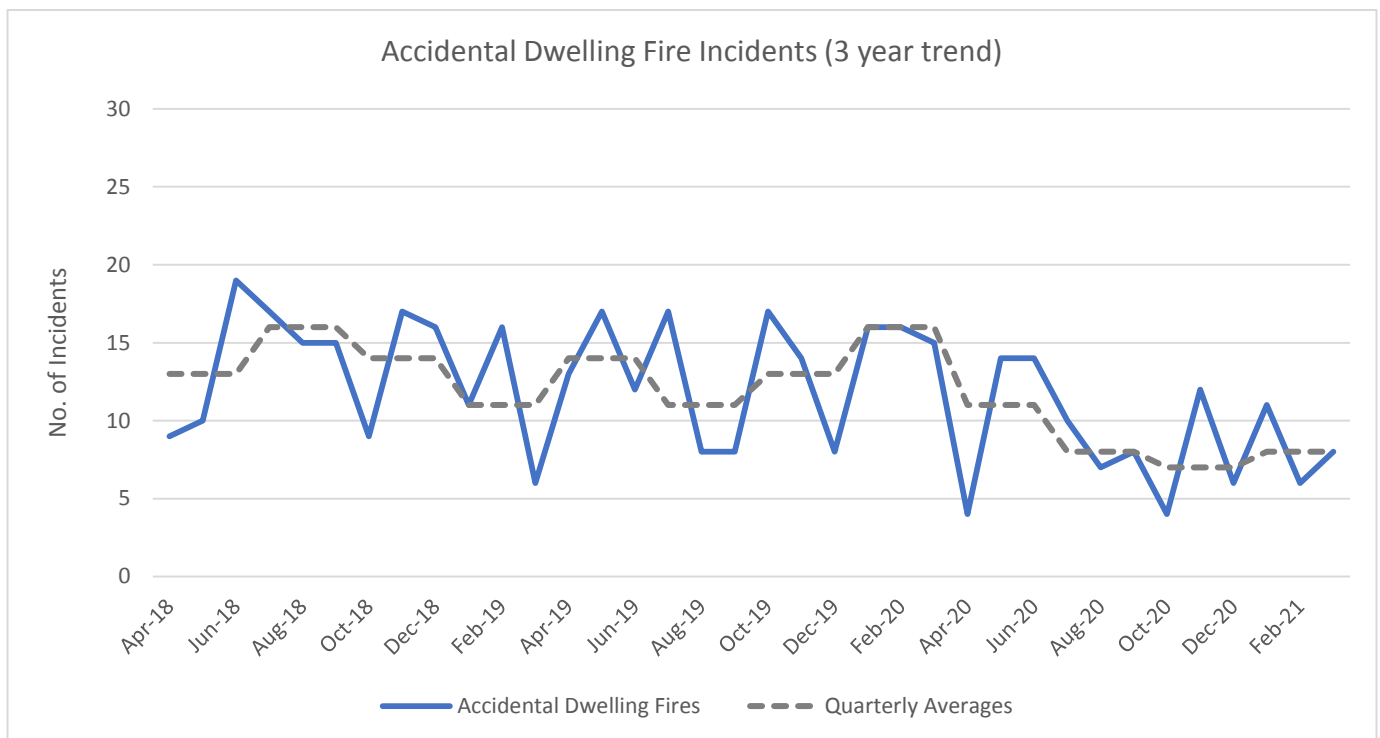
Source: Firecrest

From April 2020 to March 2021, WFRS have attended 3,473 incidents which is a 10.6% reduction (370) on the same period of 2019/20. The level of incidents has been directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The total amount of fires attended has reduced by 15% (180 incidents) and in particular there has been a large reduction in the number of deliberate fires (27%, 119). False alarms experienced an increase of 0.8% (12 incidents). Road traffic collisions saw a reduction of 22% (77 incidents) and levels for Special Services attendances reduced by 18% (123 incidents). Special Services incidents are non-fire related incidents (excluding road traffic collisions).

The peak seen in Summer 2018 occurred due to the increase in fire related incidents which was the result of a month long heatwave.

The Service monitors levels and types of incidents to address any emerging issues to inform community prevention activities. The increasing number of false alarms resulting from unwanted signals from fire alarm systems in life risk premises (e.g. care homes) will need to be addressed as soon as possible once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. The Service has to respond to such calls but, at the moment, sending non-emergency staff into such premises to give advice and help reduce the number of calls is not possible.

2.3 Number of Accidental Dwelling Fires



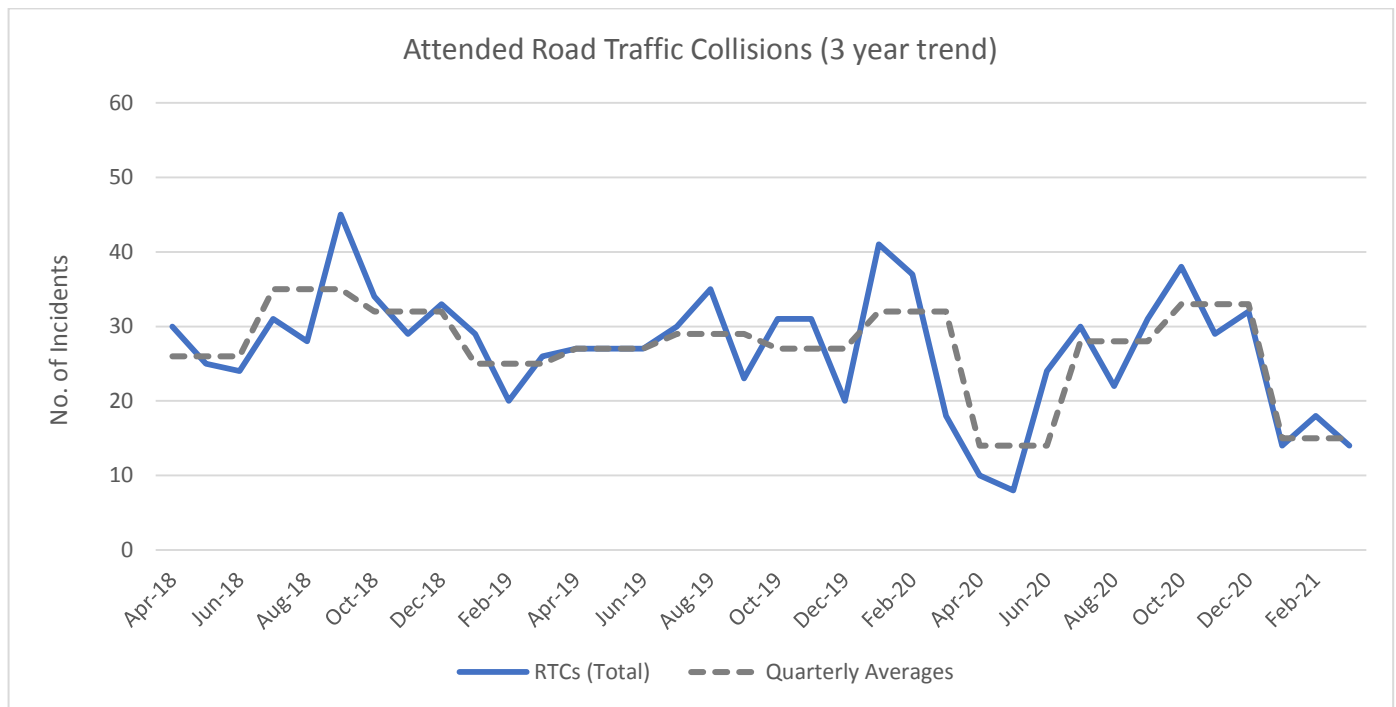
Source: Firecrest

From April 2020 to March 2021, WFRS have attended 104 accidental dwelling fires, which is a 35.4% reduction (57 incidents) when comparing to the same period of 2019/20 (161). The level of incidents has been directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. More people are remaining in their homes and are likely to spot fires and report them sooner. Incident levels and severity of incident are monitored closely to identify and react to any emerging trends. National benchmarking for 2019/20 indicates that Warwickshire remains a top performer when compared nationally.

Since July 2019 an addition to the Firecrest incident system questions has made it possible to understand how many accidental dwelling fires are confined to the room of origin. The proportion of fires confined to the room of origin has increased over the last two years. For the period April 2020 to March 2021, 86% of accidental fires are confined to the room of origin which is an increase from 82% reported between July 2019 and March 2020. It is possible that this increase could be attributed to an increase of people working from home and being more vigilant.

A risk analysis for Accidental Dwelling Fires has been recently conducted by the Business Intelligence team which highlights Mosaic Groups which are most at risk of suffering a fire to assist with targeting preventative work across Warwickshire (by identifying where these groups live). The team have also conducted a piece of analysis to assist with targeting Safe and Well Checks to vulnerable households in the community.

2.4 Number of Road Traffic Collisions Attended



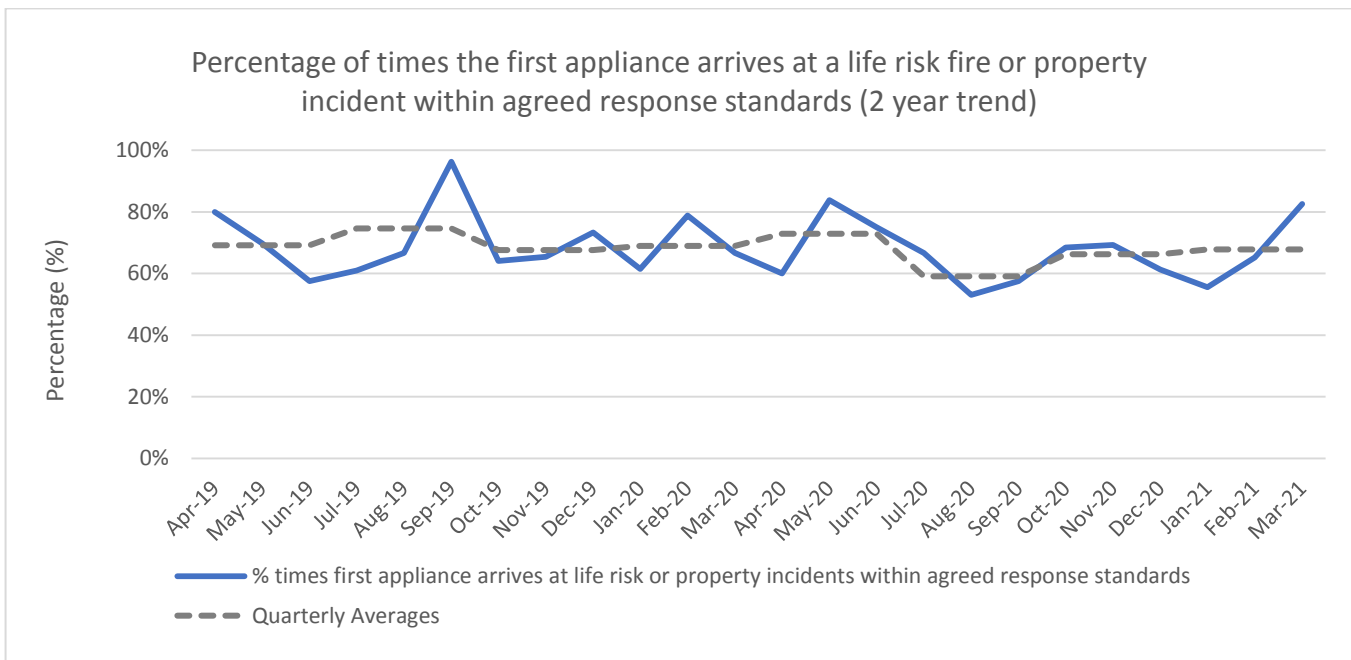
Source: Firecrest

From April 2020 to March 2021, Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service have attended 270 road traffic collisions, which is a 22.2% reduction (77 incidents) when comparing to the same period of 2019/20 (347). The figures have been greatly affected by the lockdown period for the COVID-19 pandemic but the number of road traffic collisions have been increasing since lockdown restrictions eased. Of the total of road traffic collisions attended, there have been 55 incidents requiring extrications, which is 44% less than last year (44).

The frequency, types and locations of this type of incident are monitored closely to identify any emerging trends and subsequent prevention activity. The Business Intelligence team conducted an analytical profile of people killed or seriously injured on Warwickshire roads by station cluster to reveal the trends, the key themes for accidents and the hotspot areas. The profile has been shared with all of the station managers, firefighters and the WCC Road Safety Team to assist with preventative work.

The Service continue to work in partnership to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on Warwickshire roads, also working with surrounding Fire Services.

2.5 Response Times



Source: Firecrest, Vision

The April 2020 to March 2021 figure for the percentage of times an appliance arrives at life risk or property incidents within agreed response standards is 66.54% which is a reduction on the year end 2019/20 figure of 70.1%. The target time is ten minutes for the first attending appliance. The average time to respond to a life risk incident for the attending appliance is:

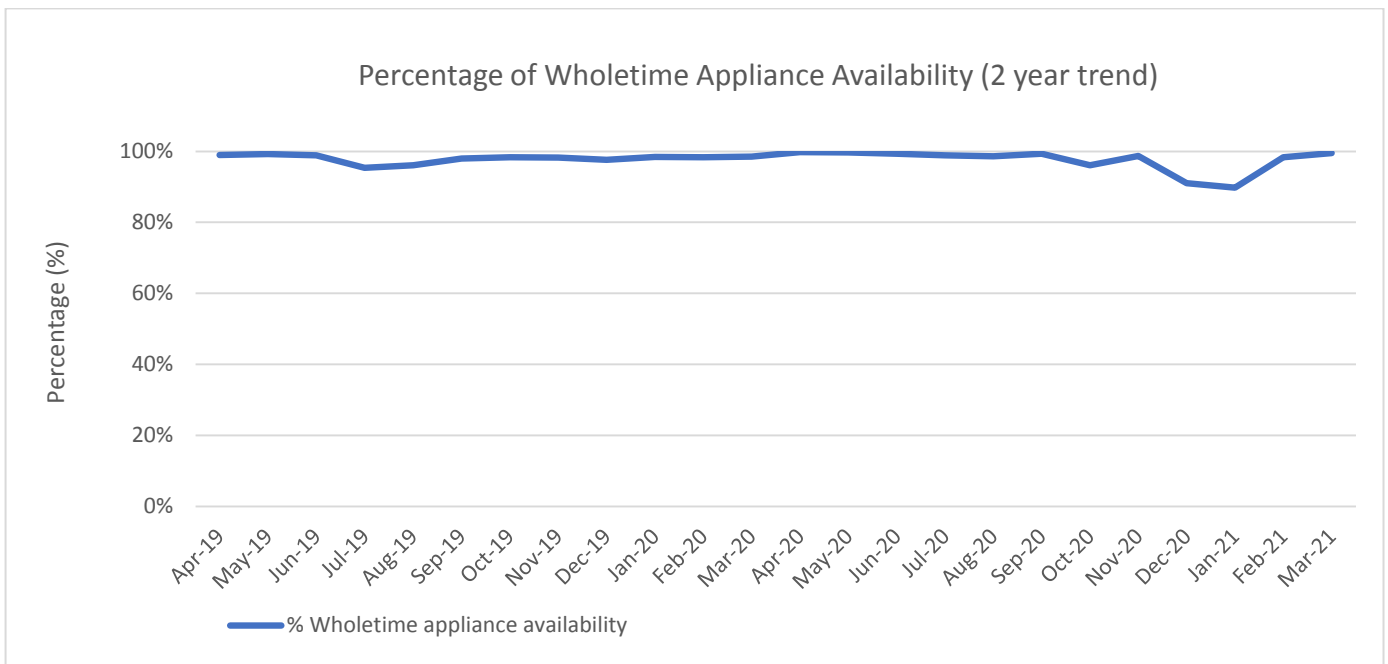
- 8 minutes 32 seconds for Fire incidents
- 9 minutes 47 seconds for Road Traffic Collisions
- 8 minutes 25 seconds for Special Services incidents

For initial appliances which missed the 10 minute target the average time for response was:

- 13 minutes 47 seconds for Fire incidents
- 12 minutes 55 seconds for Road Traffic Collisions
- 13 minutes 39 seconds for Special Services incidents

The Service focuses its attention and short-term remedial measures on the incidents which occurred within the modelled 10 minute response time but at which that target time was missed. The COVID-19 epidemic has resulted in a welcome reduction in life risk incidents as people spot potential situations in the home earlier and travel less, resulting in a reduction in serious fires and road traffic collisions. The epidemic has also had the effect of reducing the support available to On-Call fire stations from Whole-time station as the Service introduced station "bubbles" and had to cancel a programmed recruits course to prevent spread of the virus. Resultant lower availability on rural On-Call stations combined with the usual wide geographical spread of incidents has resulted in significant variations from month to month.

2.6 Wholetime Appliance Availability



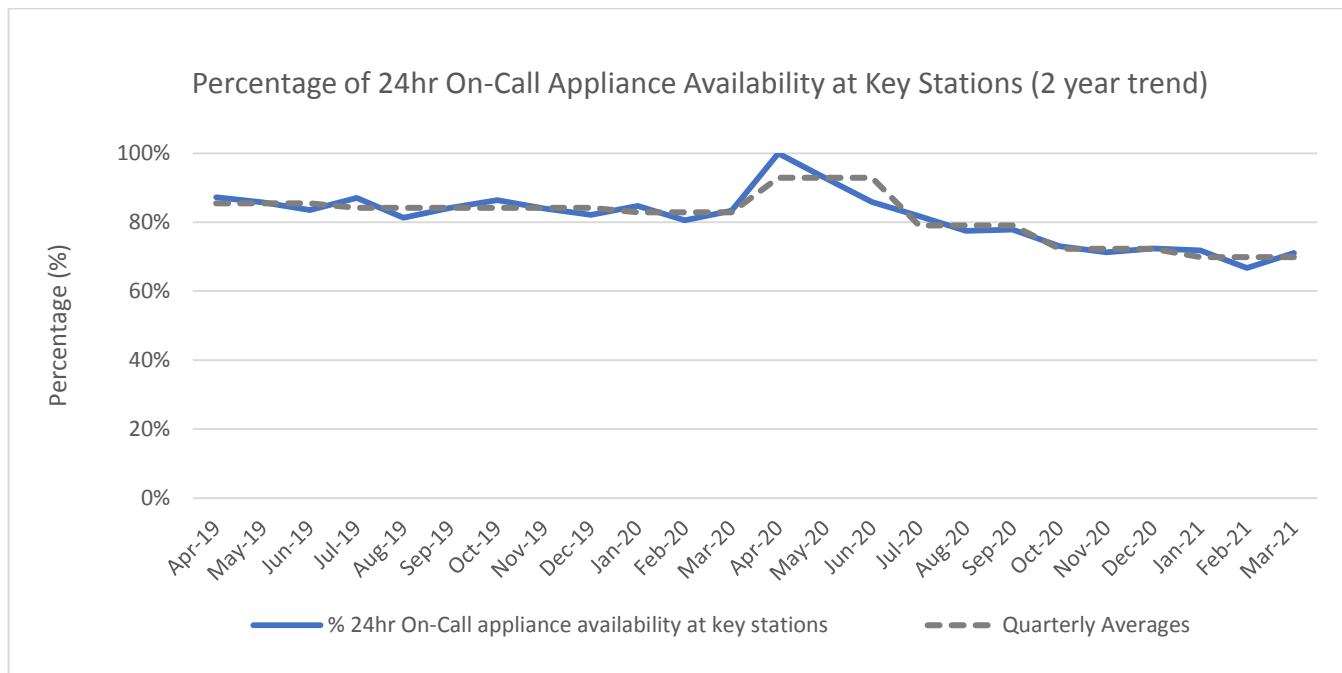
Source: One Drive, Wholetime Availability Spreadsheets, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22

The average Wholetime appliance availability for the full year 2020/21 is 97.42%, which is a very slight reduction on the 2019/20 figure (97.99%).

A decision was taken early in the COVID-19 epidemic to create station bubbles in order to limit the potential spread of COVID-19. This has had a slight downward effect on availability, although the service has not found itself in the position of having to respond with depleted numbers.

The use of temporary contracts, transfers in from other Services and the introduction of a pool of recently retired firefighters working part time to fill crewing gaps should assist with availability. The agreed additional funding to mitigate fatigue associated with working the Day Crewed Plus duty system should affect a significant improvement in overall appliance availability once new Firefighters have been recruited and trained to take up the positions.

2.7 24hr On-Call Appliance Availability at Key Stations



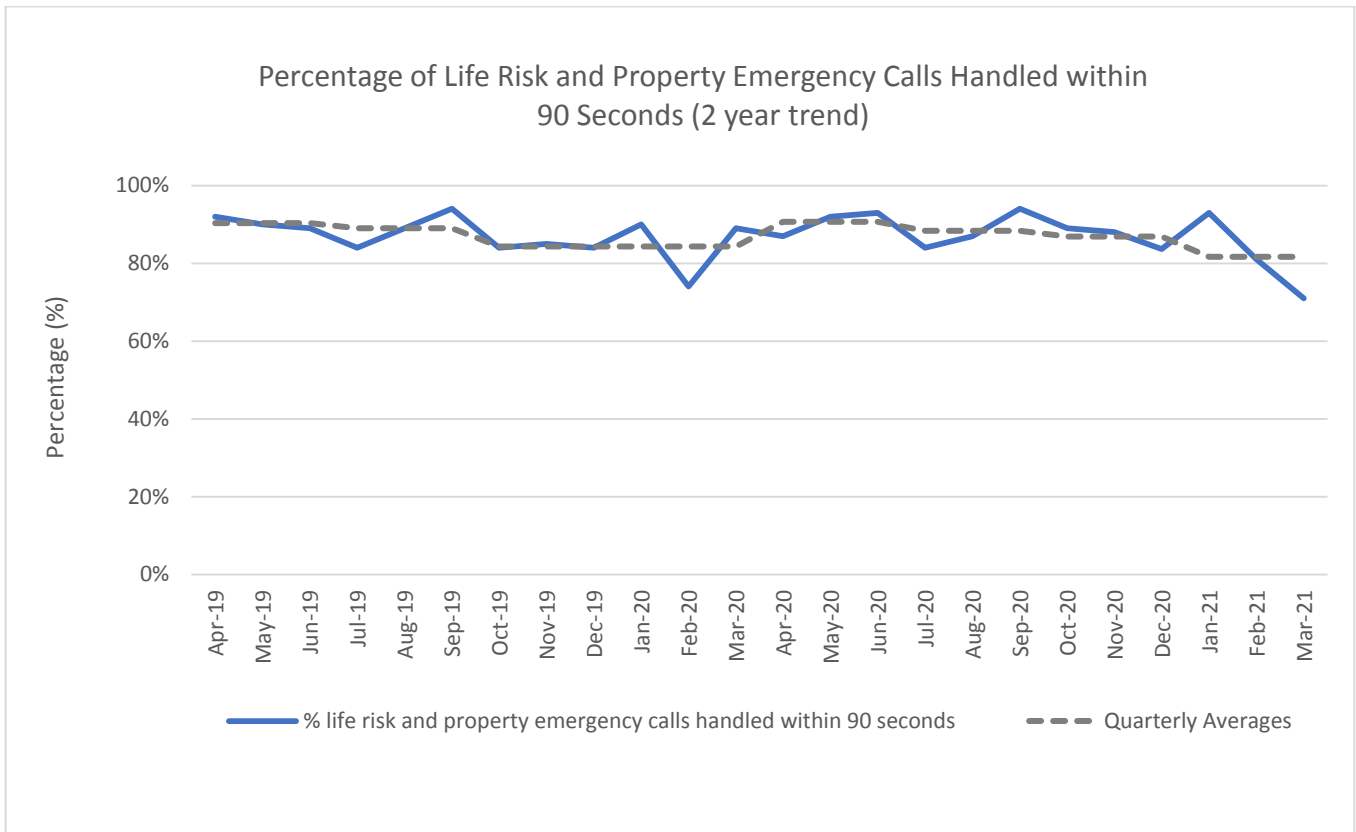
Source: Fire Service Rota

From 1st November 2020 it was agreed that going forward, the key availability measure (percentage) should focus on on-call crews that are available as a full crew to respond to Priority 1 incidents. The figures reflect this change from the 1st November. For the period November 2020 to March 2021 the average on-call availability figure for the full year is 70.67%.

Improved availability of On-Call staff at key stations has reduced the need to support them with wholetime resources. There was a noticeable improvement during the early stages of the COVID-19 epidemic though this has waned as staff have gone back to primary employment.

The intention is to enable on call stations to become self-supporting and create a "virtuous cycle" of improving commitment and availability, though this may be tempered by the effect of recruiting on call staff in to wholetime positions. A dedicated Station Manager has been moved within Response to focus on exploring new approaches to improve on call availability which should, alongside a resumption of recruit training, begin to improve the picture. On call recruitment remains a challenge and is an ongoing and continual process.

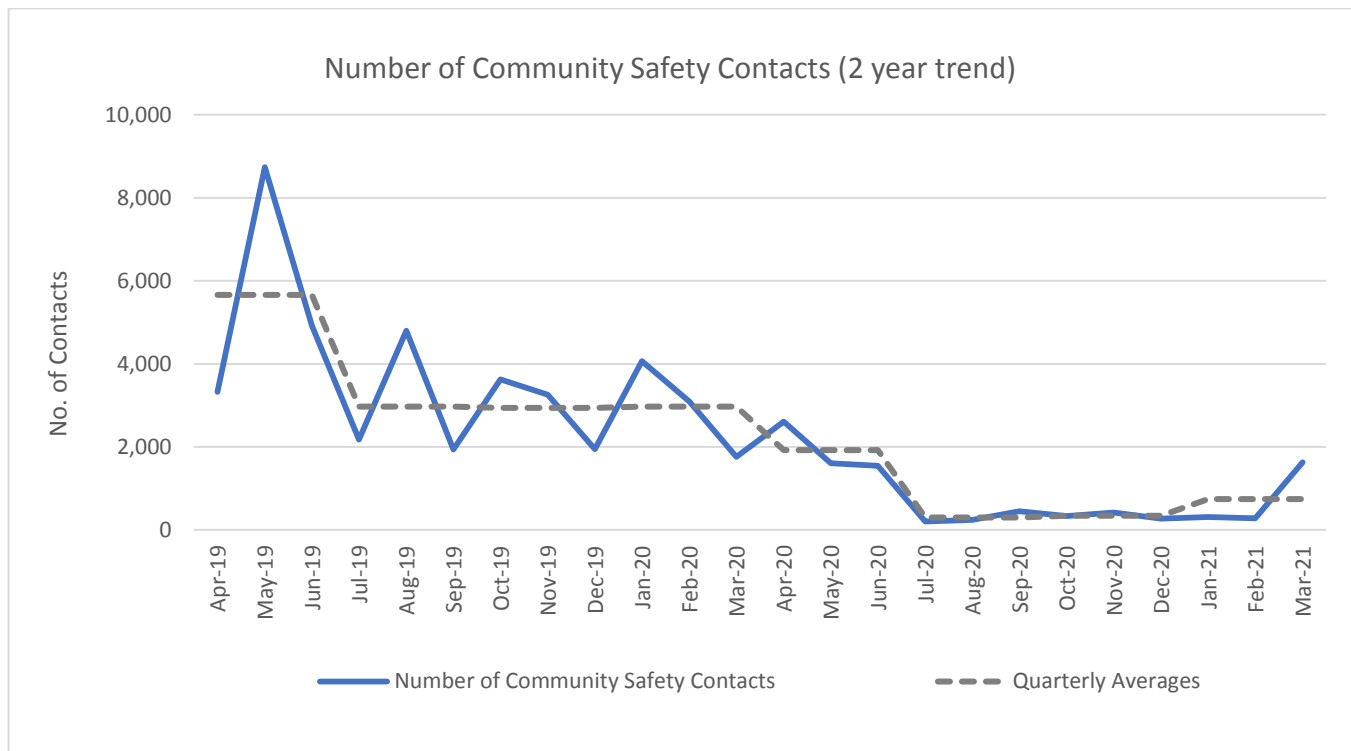
2.8 Life Risk and Property Emergency Calls Handled within 90 Seconds



Source: Fire Control - Vision

The Fire Control Team have achieved an average call handling time of 86.8% over the last 12 months - which exceeds the target of 85%. Whilst accuracy in extracting information from a caller, to inform the most suitable response, is always the predominate factor above speed, the improvement in call handling figures reflect the work that has been done to bring new members of the team fully up to speed and the improving confidence across the team.

2.9 Number of Community Safety Contacts

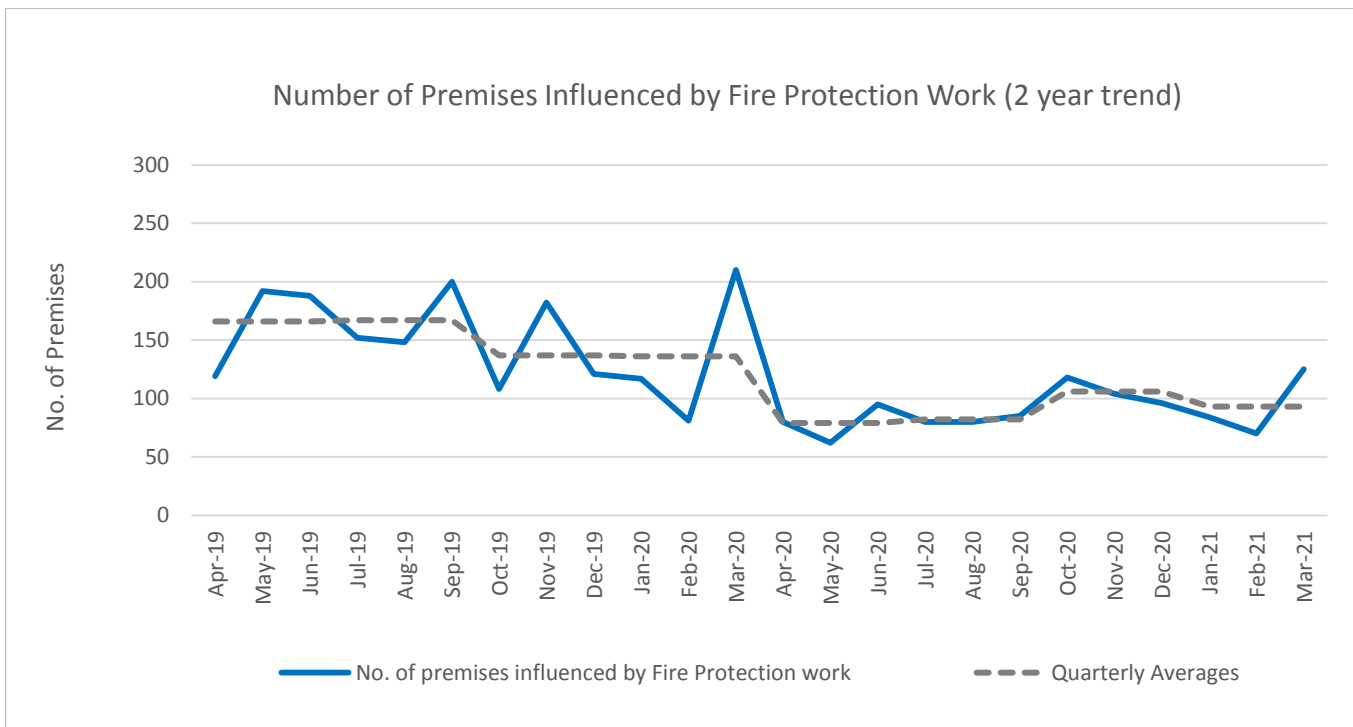


Source: Fire Prevention Team

The target has always been met and exceeded year on year through an extensive range of targeted safety initiatives and engagements that the Service would normally deliver on. However, as a result of the face to face restrictions that Covid-19 brings, the strategic intention is now to focus even more on WCC's most vulnerable, but in different ways. This will involve different ways of working, which may mean spending more time with fewer people, but these will be people with the greatest need of our prevention and community safety services, which should provide an overall increased benefit in higher risk prevention outcomes.

There has been a significant increase in Hospital to Home activity so far this year, which by definition puts us in contact with one of our key target demographics. Covid-19 has had an impact due to social distancing rules and as such WCC have not reached the 2020/21 target of 40,000 contacts. The full year figure for 2020/21 was 9,910 contacts.

2.10 No. of Premises Influenced by Fire Protection Work



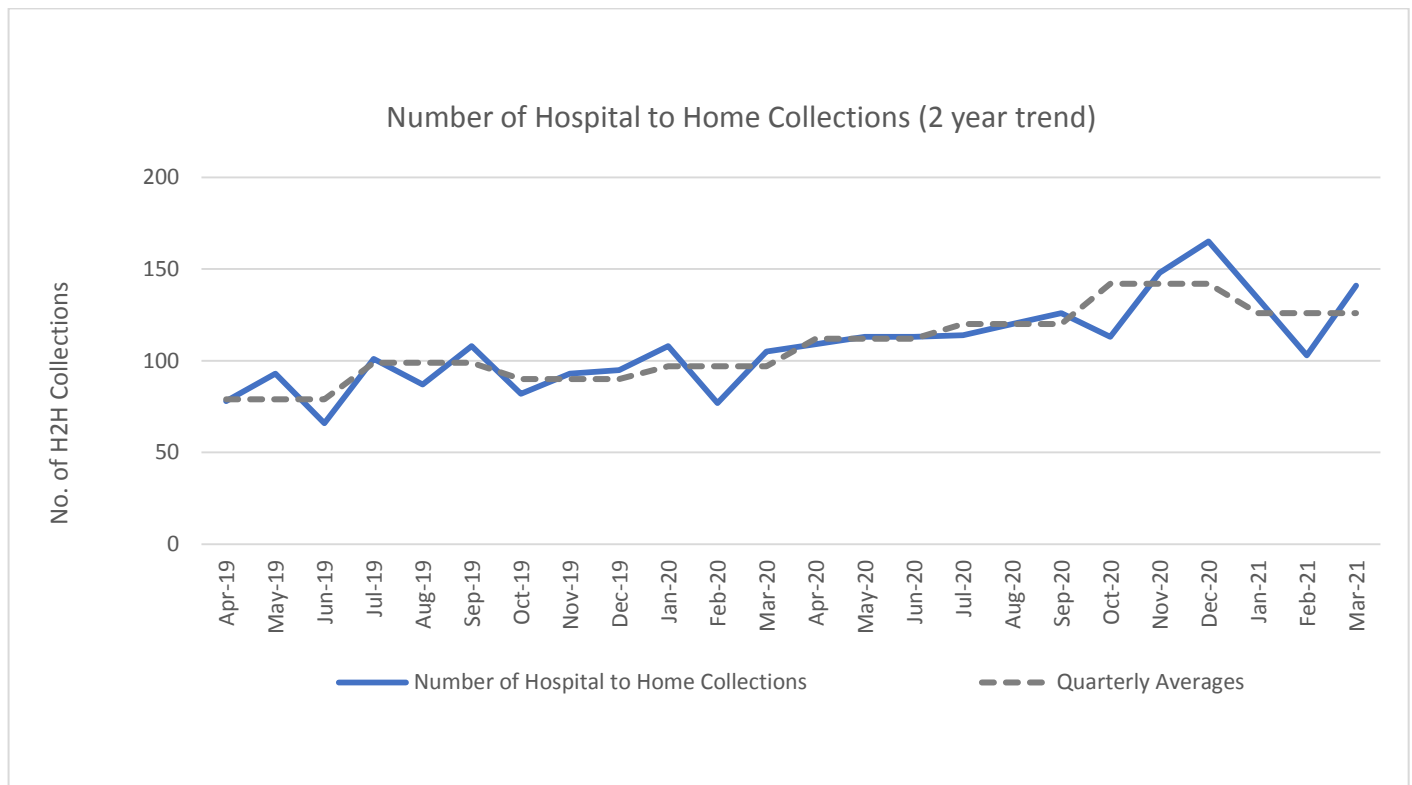
Source: Fire Protection Team

The target for 2020/21 for the number of premises influenced by fire protection work was 2,000 compared to the actual figure achieved of 1,079. This was a new measure that was introduced last year to reflect the positive contribution Fire Protection activity has within the communities of Warwickshire.

Much of the work that derives this performance figure is driven by audits of premises/structures falling under legislation relating to the hospitality sector, wedding venues, planning and building controls and sports grounds, as well as wider business premises concerns. These areas have been significantly hit by the pandemic and consequently there has been a reduction of incoming work coupled with the inability to visit premises such as care homes, schools and hospitals for the purpose of inspections. A further impact has arisen due to an increase in new starters to the department due to its recent expansion. This has a direct impact on output due to the level of support that is required by existing qualified and experienced fire personnel.

The Home Office and National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) agreed that desktop audits can be included in audit returns for Fire & Rescue Services and these are reflected in performance figures from Quarter 3 onwards. Although some areas did begin to “turn back on” last summer this was in a limited way and with the subsequent re-imposition of COVID-19 restrictions, continued low performance against conventional targets continued throughout the period. The team will continue to look at alternative ways to work, maintaining their focused and targeted approach on those most vulnerable and at risk.

2.11 Hospital to Home Collections



Source: Firecrest

As noted at the start of the report, the scheme has been a success and continues to strengthen the WRFS brand within the community, and ensure the elderly and vulnerable are supported and safe.

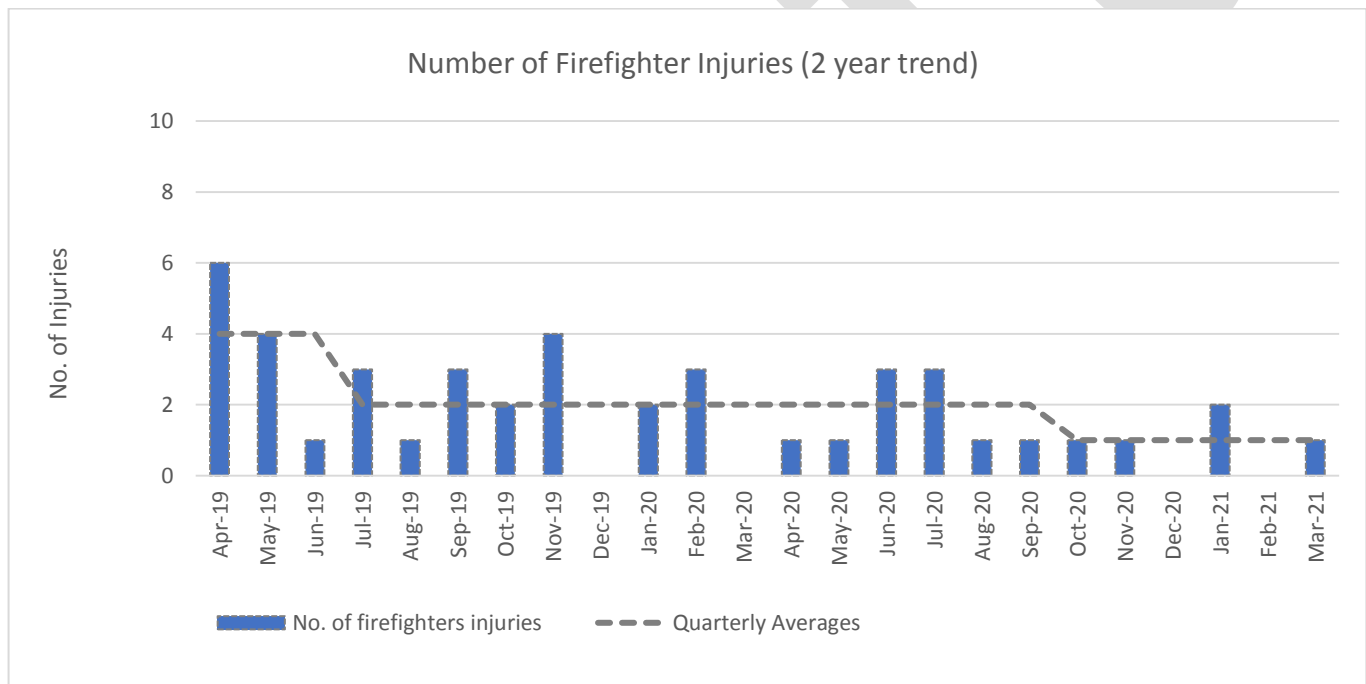
There has been a significant increase in Hospital to Home activity throughout the pandemic. The number of collections has increased from 1,092 in 2019/20 to 1,497 in 2020/21, a 37% increase (405 collections). Peaks in demand were in November and December 2020 when much of the local area was in lockdown.

2.12 No. of RIDDOR (reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences reporting)

In 2020/21 there were 4 RIDDOR incidents reported, where the target is zero. It is however encouraging to report that no 'major injuries' and 'over-7day' injuries were reported.

Two Dangerous Occurrences were reported, these involved two separate incidents on the same training course where Breathing Apparatus (BA) sets were reported going into free flow (constant flow of air into the facemask). The issue was robustly investigated and the cause identified. As a result of the incidents, all personnel were reminded of the correct cleaning and stowage of set facemasks and all training sets were inspected for the fault found. All training sets are now subject to testing carried out twice a year.

2.13 No. of Firefighters Injuries



Source: WFRS Health & Safety Team

Whilst the target for 2020/21 is zero injuries, it is accepted that minor injuries will occur during operational and training activities. There were a total of 15 injuries reported for the 2020/21 period.

All reported injuries are investigated, and remedial measures are put in place where possible and appropriate.

3.0 Financial Implications

3.1 None.

4.0 Environmental Implications

4.1 None.

5.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

5.1 Not applicable.

Background Papers

None

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