

# **Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**14 September 2022**

## **2021-22 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**

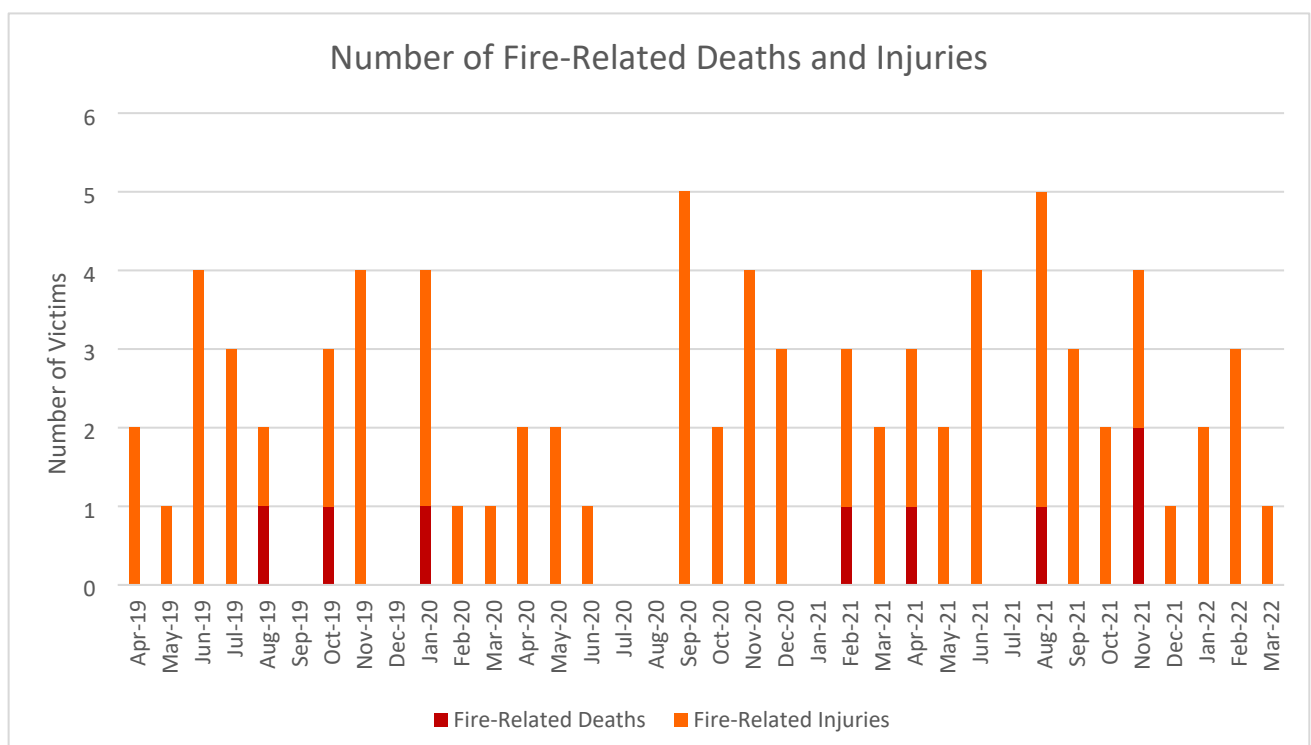
- 1.1 This report investigates the performance of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) against the key business measures reported on at a corporate level. The figures aim to give a view of historical trends over the last three years, as well as a summary of the most recent performance for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- 1.2 The performance across many of the measures has been directly affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Several incident types usually attended by firefighters have seen significant increases with the removal of local and national restrictions since Spring 2021, which has impacted the figures for 2021/22. Of note, there have been increases in the number of fire-related deaths and injuries, accidental dwelling fires and attended road traffic collisions, with some areas seeing increases of over 50%.
- 1.3 Appliance availability remained high for wholetime appliances (96.12%), with the on-call availability figure being lower at 62.46%. On-call availability figures have been impacted by recruitment challenges, periods of self-isolation and officers returning to primary employment following the worst of the Pandemic.
- 1.4 The Fire Control Team met the target of handling life risk and property emergency calls within 90 seconds on 88% of occasions over the last twelve months, continuing to exceed the target of 85%.
- 1.5 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, including conducting online Safe and Well checks to ensure people remain safe in their homes. Teams have also assisted with prescription drops, welfare calls and food parcel coordination when needed. As a result of COVID-19 restrictions being lifted, there was a 232% increase in Safe and Well checks from 2020/21 to 2021/22.

- 1.6 The Hospital to Home scheme has been a success and continues to strengthen the WRFs brand within the community and to ensure the elderly and vulnerable are supported and safe. Levels increased significantly during the pandemic, but demand has reduced slightly over the past 12 months.
- 1.7 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.
- 1.8 New analytical reports are being developed regularly by the Business Intelligence team and are shared with Service personnel at all levels to assist with prevention work and targeting resources more effectively.

## 2.0 Key Business Measures

### 2.1 Fire-Related Deaths and Injuries



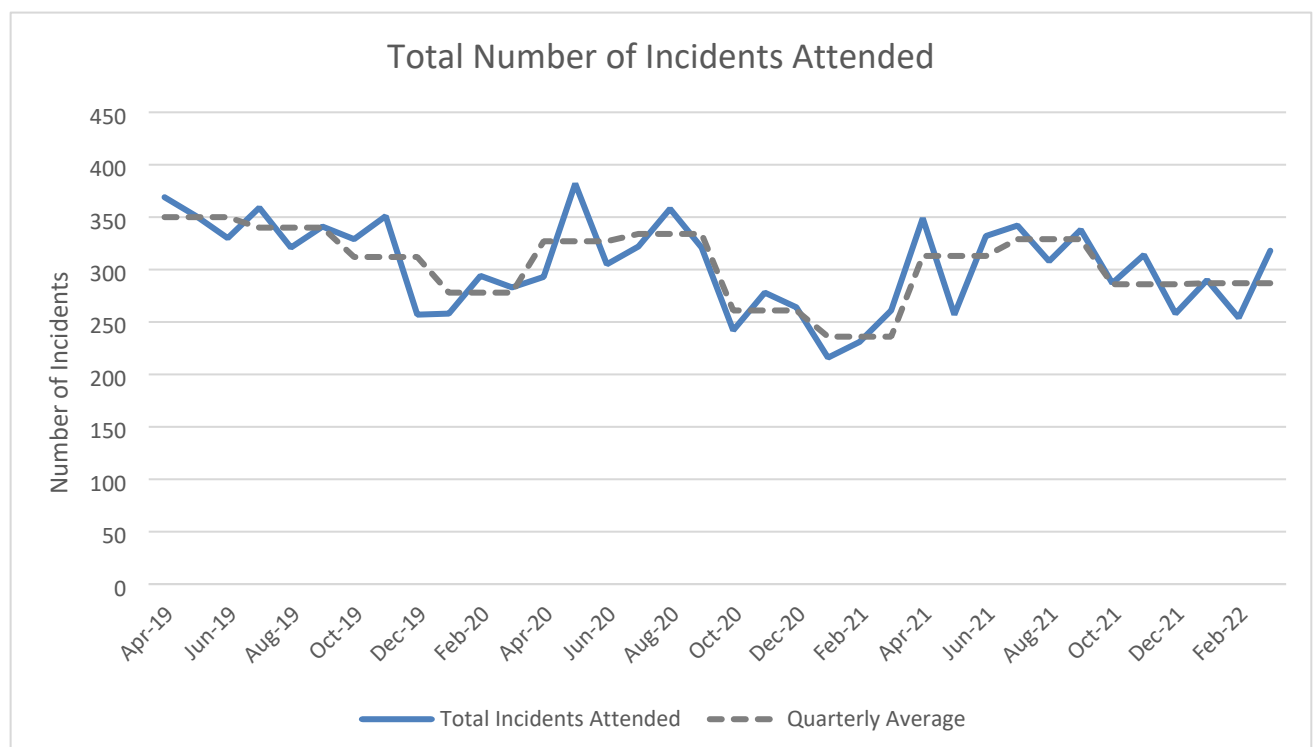
Source: Firecrest

In 2021/22 there were four fire-related deaths recorded, which is an increase on one recorded in the same period of 2020/21. Early indications suggest that three of these were fire suicides although the coroner has yet to confirm whether two of these were fire-related and the figure will be updated once we have their confirmation. In the event of a fire-related death, the Service investigates in order to understand causes and identify any appropriate improvement activity.

In 2021/22 there were 26 fire-related injuries recorded, which is an increase of three incidents compared to the 23 fire-related injuries recorded in the same period of 2020/21. For the 26 victims, 13 victims were taken to hospital and 13 were given first aid at the scene. Four incidents saw victims with serious injuries.

The Service closely monitors levels and types of incidents involving fire-related injuries to address any emerging issues and to inform community prevention activity. Following any incident that results in a fatality or life changing injury, the Service conducts a Significant Fire Incident Review with appropriate partners. The purpose of these reviews is to assess current partnership working and embed any lessons learnt in order to reduce the chance of similar incidents happening again.

## 2.2 Number of Attended Incidents



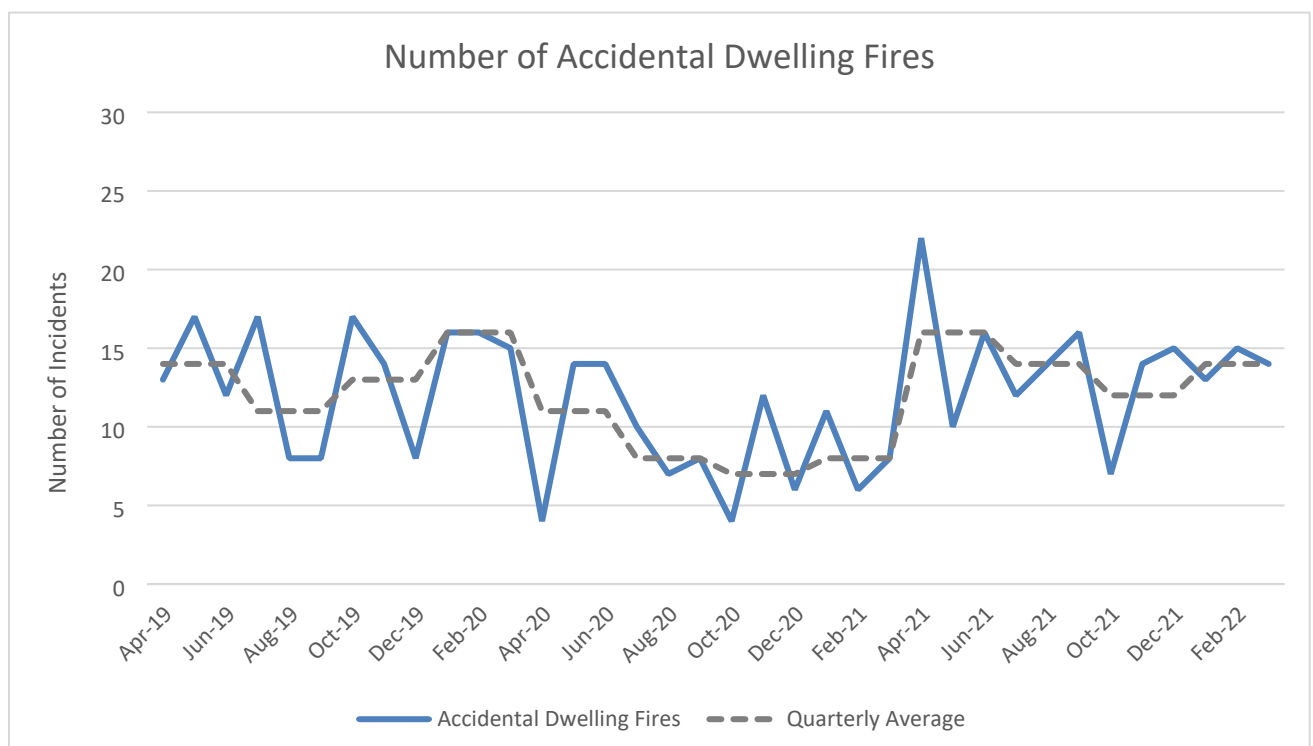
Source: Firecrest

From April 2021 to March 2022, WFRS attended 3,473 incidents, which is a 5% (174 incidents) increase on the same period of 2020/21. Most incident levels saw a reflective

increase with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. The total number of fires attended decreased by 1.5% (16 incidents), however different types of fires saw varying levels of change. This included a 64.6% increase (73 incidents) in dwelling fires and a 28.9% reduction (37 incidents) in other primary fires. Road traffic collisions saw an increase of 38.5% (104 incidents), special services attendances increased by 14.2% (80 incidents) and false alarms experienced an increase of 0.3% (6 incidents).

The Service monitors levels and types of incidents to address any emerging issues and to inform community prevention activities.

### 2.3 Number of Accidental Dwelling Fires



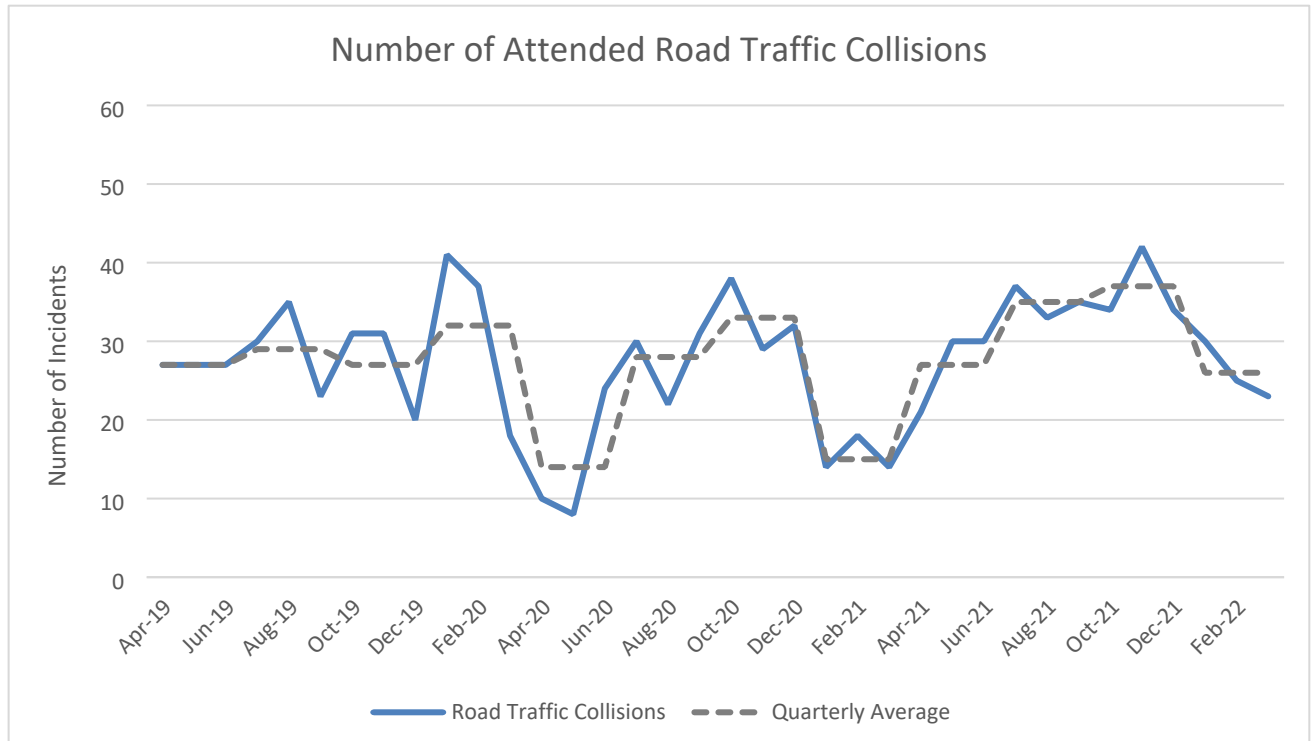
Source: Firecrest

From April 2021 to March 2022, WFRS attended 168 accidental dwelling fires, which is a 51.9% (54 incidents) increase when comparing to the same period of 2020/21. The number of incidents has been directly affected by the removal of COVID-19 restrictions. Fewer people are remaining in their homes and are less likely to spot fires and report them sooner. Incident levels and the severity of incidents are monitored closely to identify and react to any emerging trends. National benchmarking for 2021/22 indicates that Warwickshire remains a top performer when compared nationally.

The proportion of fires confined to the room of origin has increased over the last two years. For the period April 2021 to March 2022, 90.8% of accidental fires are confined to the room of origin which is an increase from 86.2% reported between April 2020 and March 2021.

This increase could be attributed to an increase in the number people working from home and being more vigilant.

## 2.4 Number of Road Traffic Collisions Attended

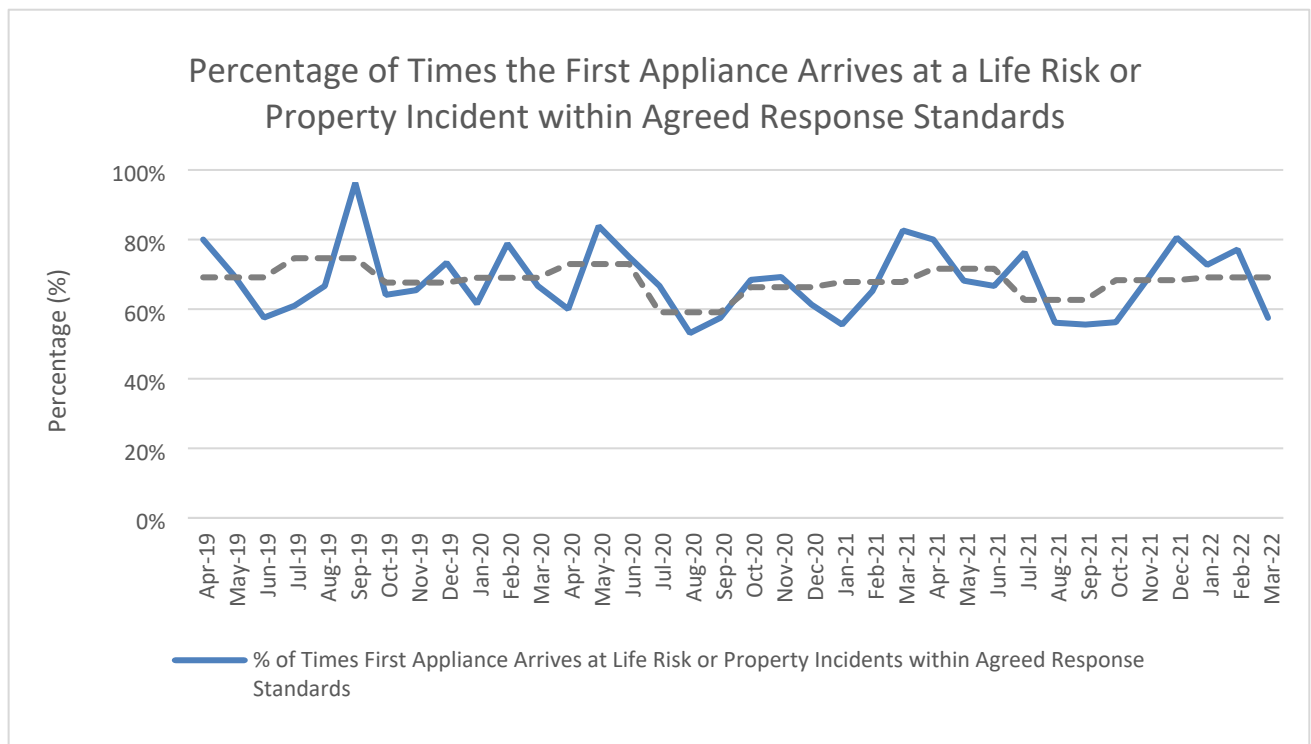


Source: Firecrest

From April 2021 to March 2022, Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service attended 374 road traffic collisions, which is a 38.5% (104 incidents) increase when comparing to the same period of 2020/21. The figures have been greatly affected by the removal of COVID-19 restrictions. Of the 374 road traffic collisions attended, there were 80 incidents requiring extrications, which is 63.6% (55 incidents) more than last year.

The frequency, types and locations of road traffic collisions are monitored closely to identify any emerging trends and subsequent prevention activity. 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

Between April 2021 and March 2022, an appliance arrived at life risk or property incidents within agreed response standards (10 minutes from the time of assignment for 75% of incidents) 67.9% of the time, which is an increase on the 2020/21 figure of 66.9%. 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 was:

- 8 minutes 28 seconds for Fire incidents
- 10 minutes 36 seconds for Road Traffic Collisions
- 6 minutes 58 seconds for Special Services incidents

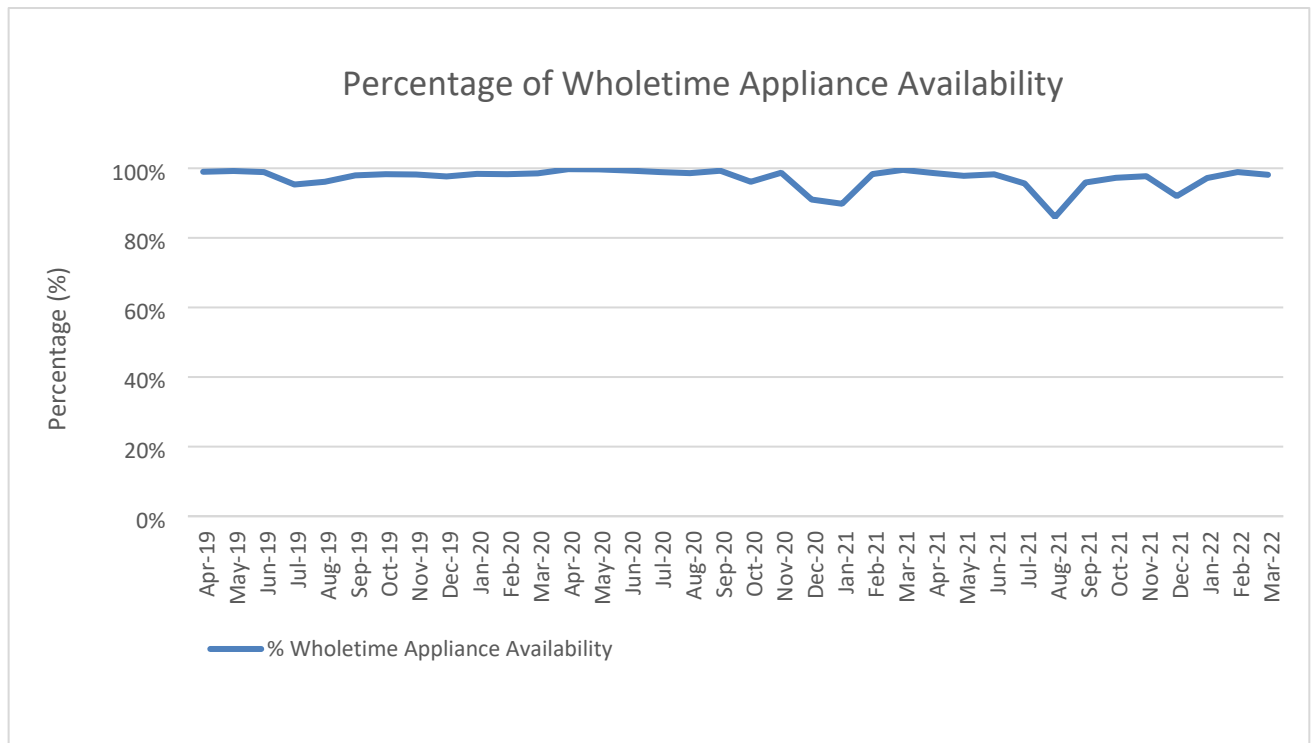
For initial appliances that missed the 10-minute target, the average time for response was:

- 13 minutes 33 seconds for Fire incidents
- 14 minutes 35 seconds for Road Traffic Collisions
- 14 minutes 46 seconds for Special Services incidents

The Service focuses its attention and short-term remedial measures on incidents where the modelled 10-minute response time was missed, as opposed to the incidents where it was not. Response times are being reviewed based upon the new risk analysis report. The lifting of COVID-19 restrictions has resulted in an increase in life risk incidents as people are at home less and travel more, resulting in an increase in serious fires and road traffic collisions. The Pandemic has also had the effect of reducing the support available to on-

call fire stations from wholetime stations as the Service introduced station "bubbles" and had to cancel a programmed recruits course to help prevent spread of the virus. Resultant lower availability for 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



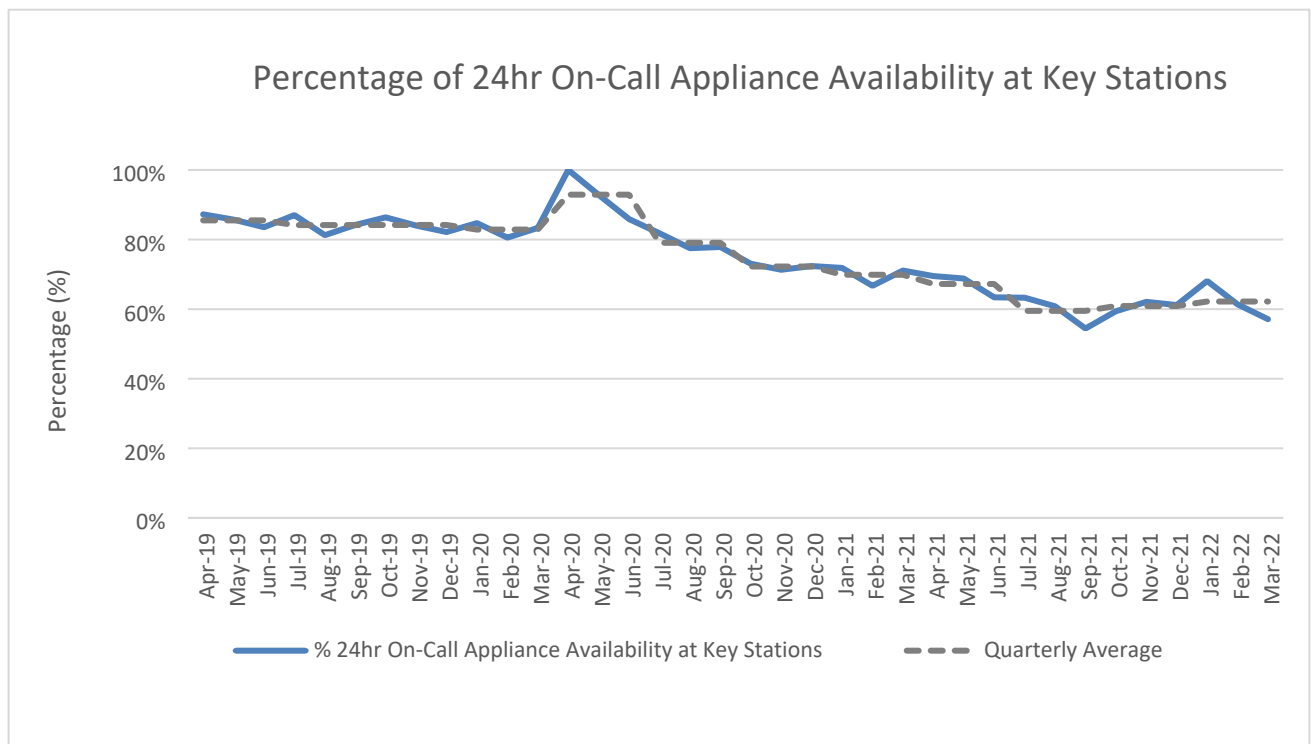
Source: One Drive, Wholetime Availability Spreadsheets, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22

The average wholetime appliance availability for 2021/22 was 96.12%, which is a slight reduction on the 2020/21 figure of 97.42%.

A decision was taken early in the COVID-19 pandemic 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 use of a pool of recently retired firefighters working part time to fill crewing gaps were some of the measures taken to assist with availability. Once new firefighters have been recruited and trained to take up the positions, the agreed additional funding to mitigate fatigue associated with working the Day Crewed Plus duty system should have a significant improvement in overall appliance availability.

## 2.7 24hr On-Call Appliance Availability at Key Stations



Source: Fire Service Rota

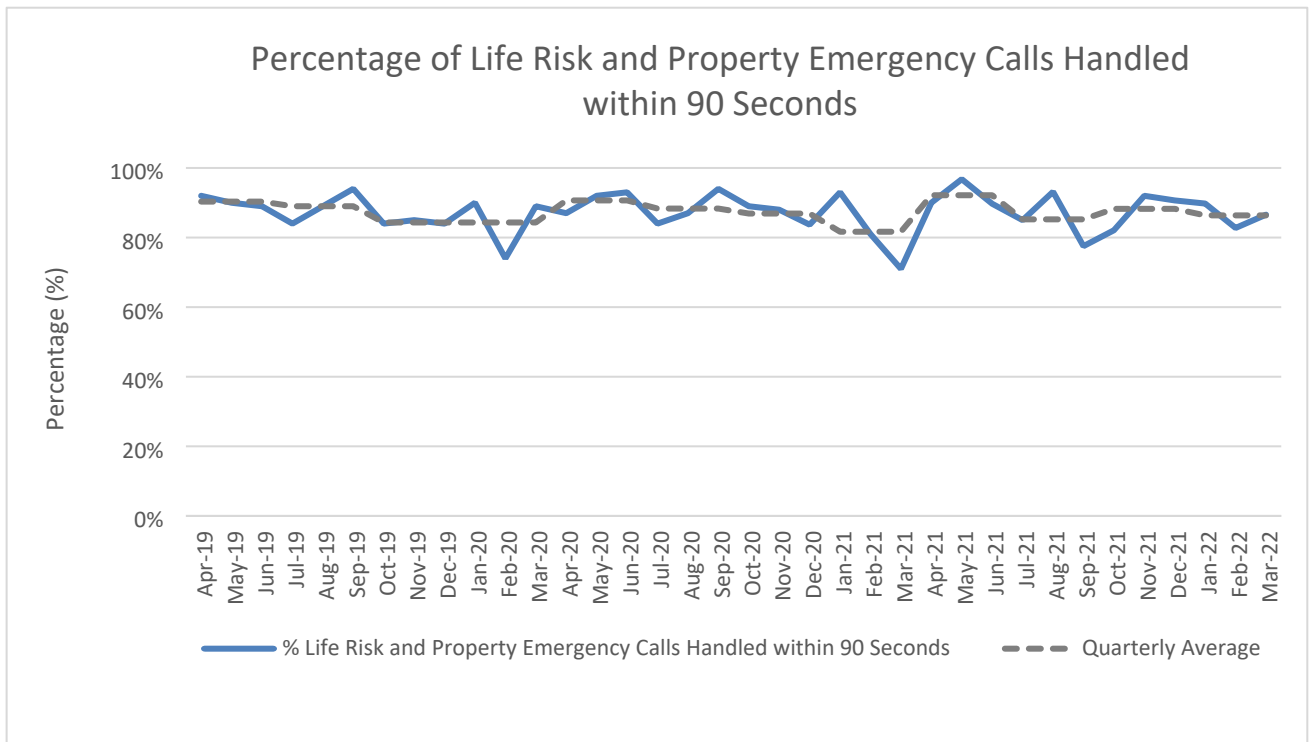
From 1st November 2020, it was agreed that going forward the key availability measure should focus on on-call crews that are available as a full crew to respond to Priority 1 incidents. For the period April 2021 to March 2022, the average on-call availability figure was 62.46%, a decrease from 78.52% for the year before.

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 pandemic, 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 into 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 achieved an average call handling time of 88% (calls handled within 90 seconds) 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

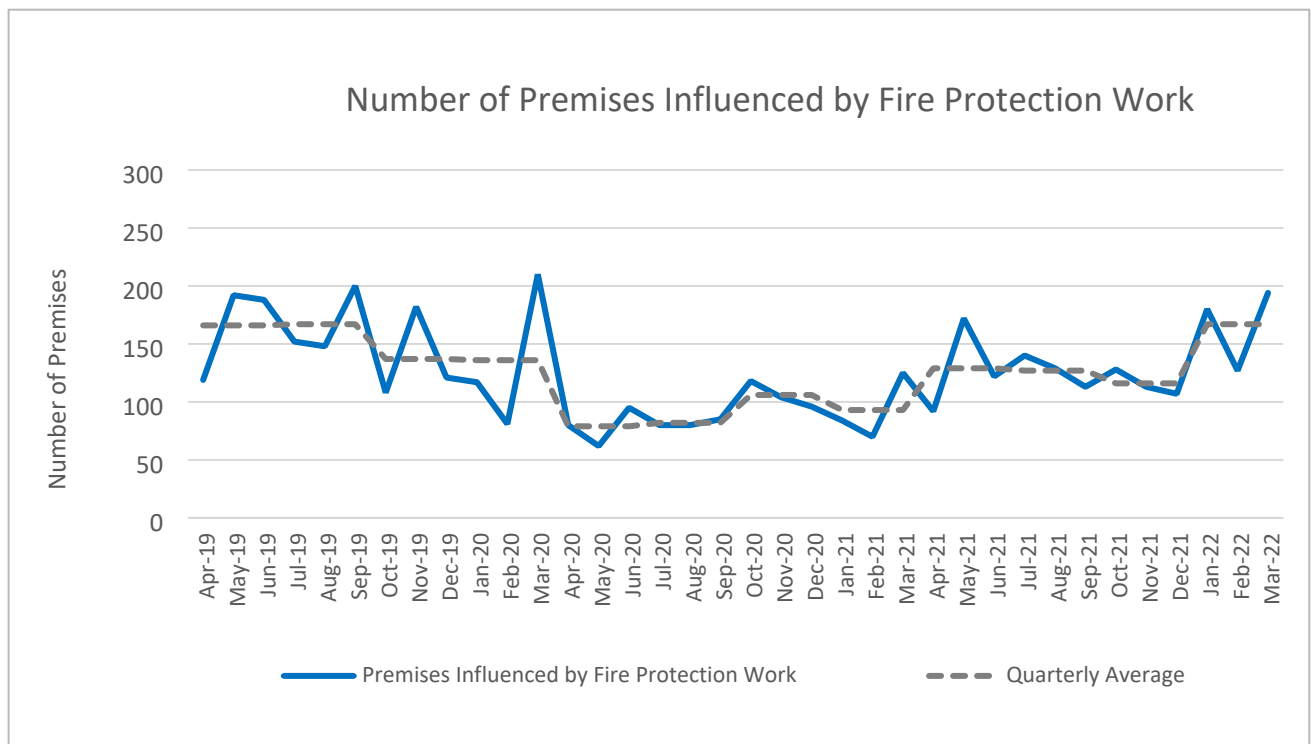


Source: Fire Prevention Team

The target number of contacts has always been exceeded 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 brought, the strategic intention was to focus even more on WCC's most vulnerable, but in different ways. This involved different ways of working, including spending more time with fewer people, with these people being those with the greatest need of our prevention and community safety services, providing an overall increased benefit in higher risk prevention outcomes.

Hospital to Home activity has remained high this year, which has put 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 were not able to reach the 2021/22 target of 40,000 contacts. However, with the lifting of restrictions there was a 251.6% (15,019 contacts) increase in contacts, from 9,910 in 2020/21 to 24,929 in 2021/22.

## 2.10 No. of Premises Influenced by Fire Protection Work

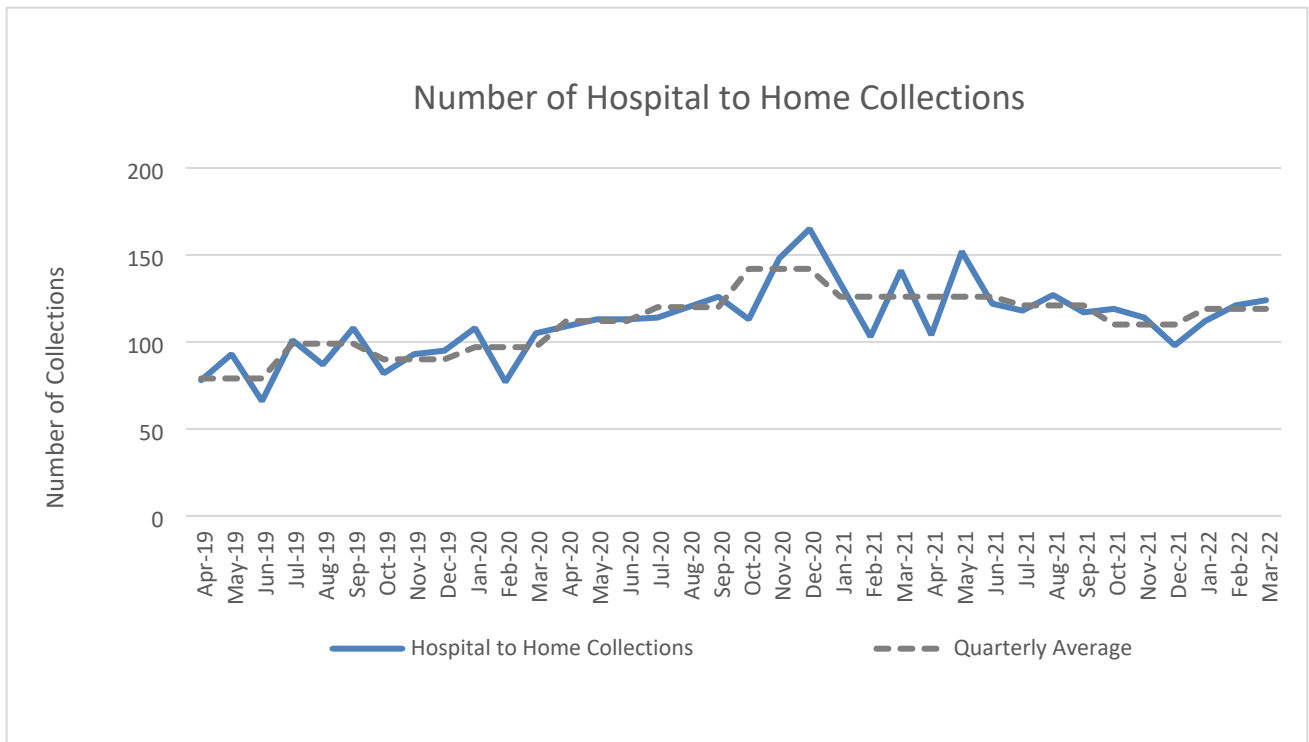


Source: Fire Protection Team

The number of premises influenced (this could be in person, via phone/email or consultation with the responsible persons) by fire protection officers for 2021/22 was 1,617, exceeding the target of 1,200. This was a new measure that was introduced two years ago 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 RRFSO 2005 and consultations driven by legislation relating to the hospitality sector, wedding venues, planning and building regulations and sports grounds, as well as wider business premises concerns. With the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, there has been an increase in incoming work and a restoration in the ability to visit premises such as care homes, schools and hospitals for the purpose of inspections, following a downward trend in the two years preceding 2021/22. The increase in the number of premises influenced in the last year can also be attributed to the experience gained by new starters from year before following an expansion to the department, which has directly impacted the output due to less support being required by existing qualified and experienced fire personnel.

## 2.11 Hospital to Home Collections



Source: Firecrest

There has been a significant increase in Hospital to Home activity since the start of the pandemic, although the number of collections decreased by 4.6% (69 collections) from 1,497 in 2020/21 to 1,428 in 2021/22. This is likely due to an increase in family members taking home patients with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. Peaks in demand were in March and May 2021 when some restrictions were still in place.

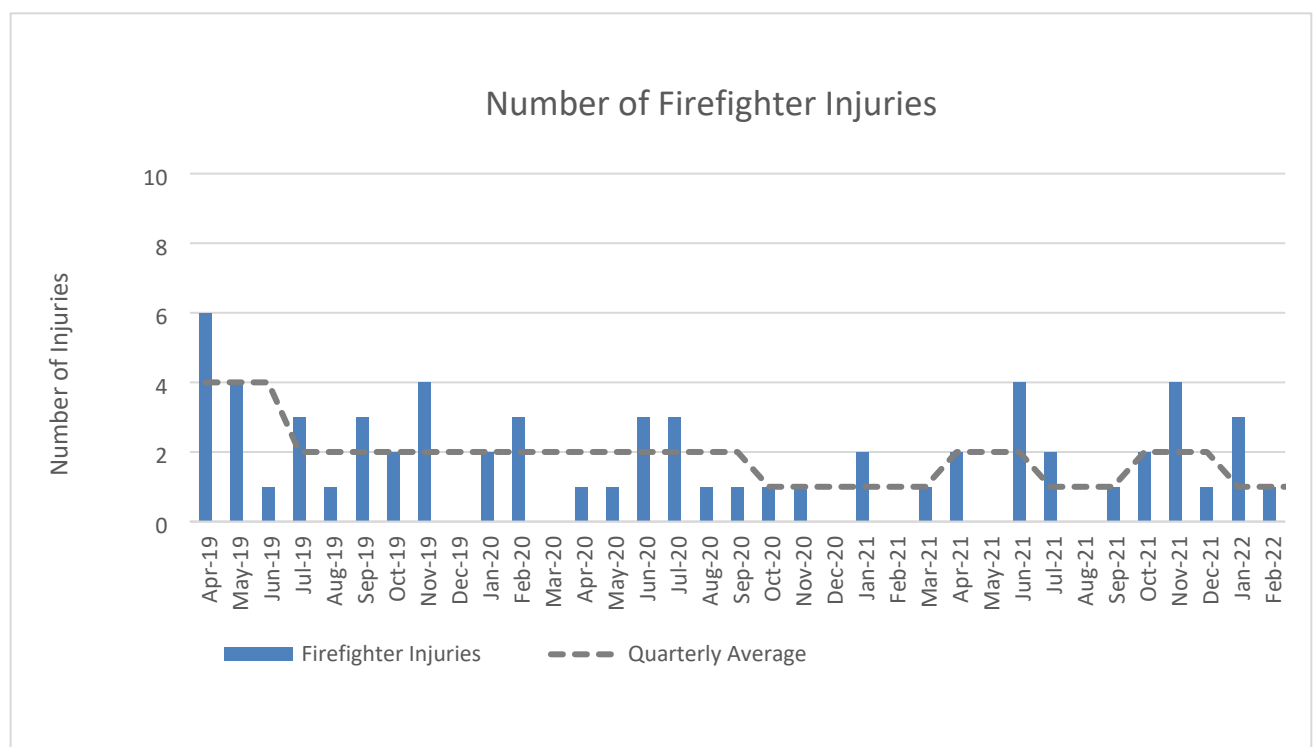
The Hospital to Home scheme was launched by WFRS in August 2018 and is run in partnership with Public Health, Adult Social Care and local hospitals. It is funded by the Better Care Fund. The primary aims of the scheme are to support elderly and vulnerable patients who have been treated at hospital and 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, along with reducing the risk to vulnerable members of the community that are statistically most at risk from fire. 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. By enabling hospitals to maximise capacity, the scheme also helps free up ambulances to respond to incidents. 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. The team will also carry out a Safe and Well check and where there are any safeguarding or welfare concerns, refer to a partner agency. Those delivering the service are not on duty and are scheduled on a self-rostering basis. The scheme has been incredibly successful and continues to strengthen WFRS' brand within the community, where staff are involved in a wide range of work to

reduce risk and keep our communities safe. There has been continually growing demand of the scheme since its inception in 2018, with a very pronounced spike in Spring 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2.12 No. of RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Reporting)

In 2021/22 there were five RIDDOR incidents reported, where the target is zero. This is a slight increase on four incidents in 2020/21. Of the five incidents, two 'major injuries' and three 'over 7 day' injuries were reported. Positively, no 'dangerous occurrence' injuries were reported.

## 2.13 No. of Firefighters Injuries



Source: WFRS Health & Safety Team

Whilst the target for 2021/22 is zero injuries, it is accepted that minor injuries will occur during operational and training activities. There were a total of 20 injuries reported for the 2021/22 period, which is an increase on 15 injuries in 2020/21.

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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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): not applicable

Other members: