

**Working together  
for a safer Scotland**



**SCOTTISH  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Working together for a safer Scotland

## **ABERDEEN CITY AREA**

# **LOCAL FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN REVIEW 2023**

**Safety. Teamwork. Respect. Innovation.**

## Introduction

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is required under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, as amended by the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, to prepare Local Fire and Rescue Plans for each local authority in Scotland.

Local Fire and Rescue Plans set out our national and local operating context and outline our specific priorities for that area. In their preparation, due regard is given to the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland and the SFRS Strategic Plan.

The publication of our new Strategic Plan 2022-25 in October 2022 instigated a requirement to carry out a mandatory review of all Local Fire and Rescue Plans. This review will provide us with information on how well we are performing against our existing priorities, as well as highlighting areas for continued improvement and opportunities for change against the growing needs of our communities.

In carrying out the review of the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Aberdeen City we firstly looked at the priorities that we had agreed for the Local Plan for 2020-2023, these were:

- Improving Fire Safety in the Home
- Reducing Deliberate Fires
- Improving Fire Safety in the Business Community
- Reducing Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals
- Effective Risk Management and Operational Preparedness

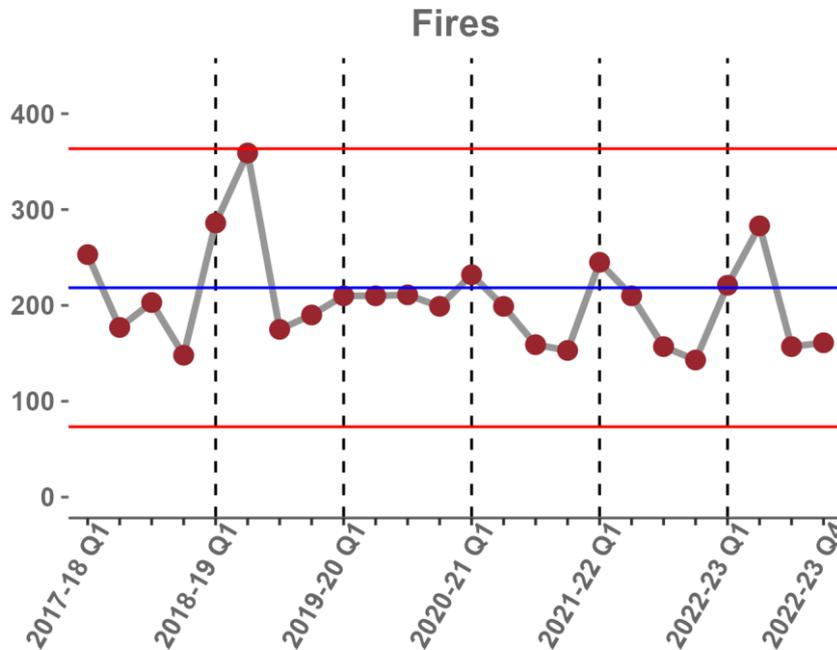
Looking at each of priorities we can now provide both quantitative and qualitative information to demonstrate the progress that has been made.

The information contained within this Review Report will contribute towards the development of a new Local Fire and Rescue Plan that is tailored to local need.

### **Performance Data – what the figures told us.**

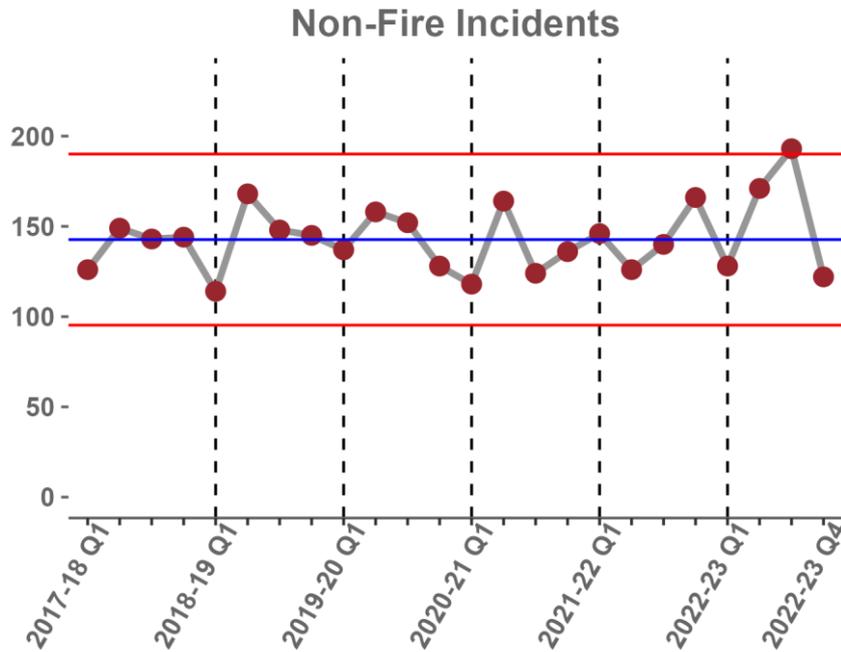
Throughout this report several charts refer to upper and lower control limits. The purpose of the limits is to define variability within the data. This means that we expect most points to fall within these limits. If a point falls outside these limits, then we can assume that something unusual has happened.

Over the past three years we have attended an average of 3868 incidents, which are broken down into Fires, Non-Fire Incidents and False Alarms below.

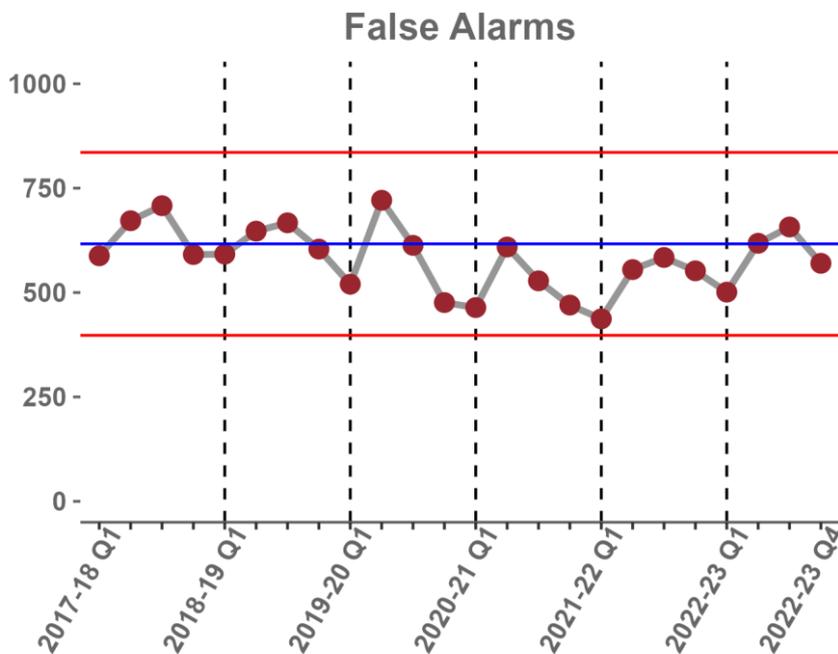


In this analysis, fire figures for Aberdeen City have been fluctuating within control limits with no overall trends since Q1 of 2017-18, that indicates a sustained increase or decrease in this incident type. Q2 of 2018-19 was near to the upper control limit. However, this returned to figures on or below average for the rest of 2018-19. Since 2018-19, figures have remained close to the average. Since 2017-18, Q4 has been consistently below average each year, indicating a possible seasonal effect on the figures. This pattern is consistent with national patterns in the data.

We attended an average of 827 fires in the past three years, of which 463 were accidental and 364 deliberate. A more detailed breakdown of incident categories can be found within the local priority sections below.



Non-fire incidents in Aberdeen City have been subject to random variation in recent years, increasing to the upper control limit in 2022-23 Q3. This returned to a figure below average in 2022-23 Q4, indicating no cause for concern. This is similar to patterns seen nationally, with there being an increase in non-fire incidents in 2022-23 Q3.



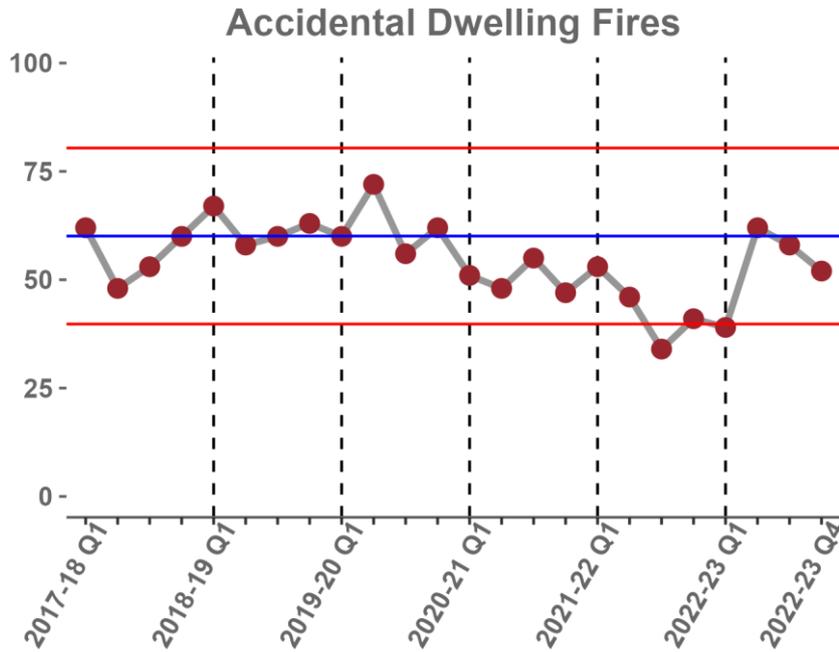
False alarm incidents in Aberdeen City have been fluctuating within control limits with no clear overall trends since 2017-18 Q1. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a decrease in false alarm incidents, shown by all data points for 2020-21 being below average. Figures remained low throughout 2021-22. In 2022-23, figures have gradually returned to a level similar to before the pandemic. This is consistent with national patterns in the data.

We attended an average of 2387 false alarms in the past three years, of which 742 were Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals from non-domestic buildings. A more detailed breakdown of incident categories can be found within the local priority sections below.

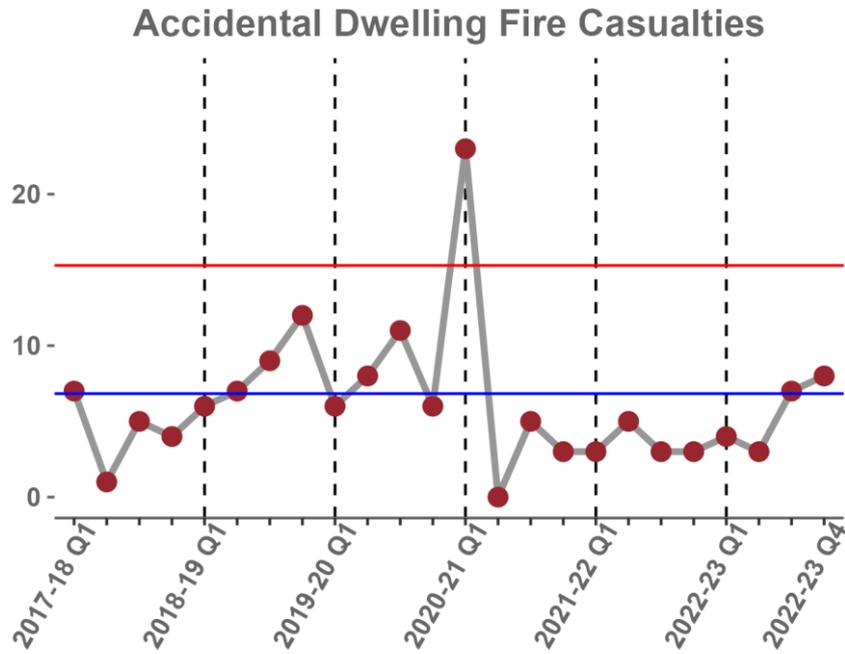
Performance Local Priorities

Local Priority 1: Improving Fire Safety in the Home

**Performance Data – What the figures told us**



Accidental dwelling fires in Aberdeen City have been decreasing overall since 2019-20 Q2. Figures have been below average since 2020-21 Q1, with data points from 2021-22 Q3 to 2022-23 Q1 being on or below the lower control limit. While ADFs rose above average in 2022-23 Q2, figures have since decreased. Nationally, ADFs have been consistently decreasing each year since 2017-18.



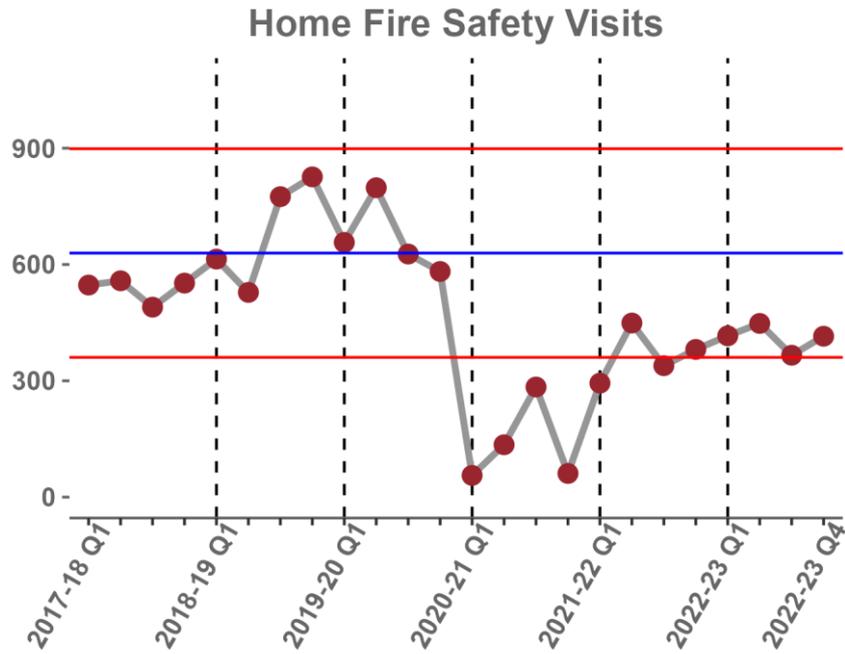
Fire Fatalities by Type

2020-21 - 2022-23

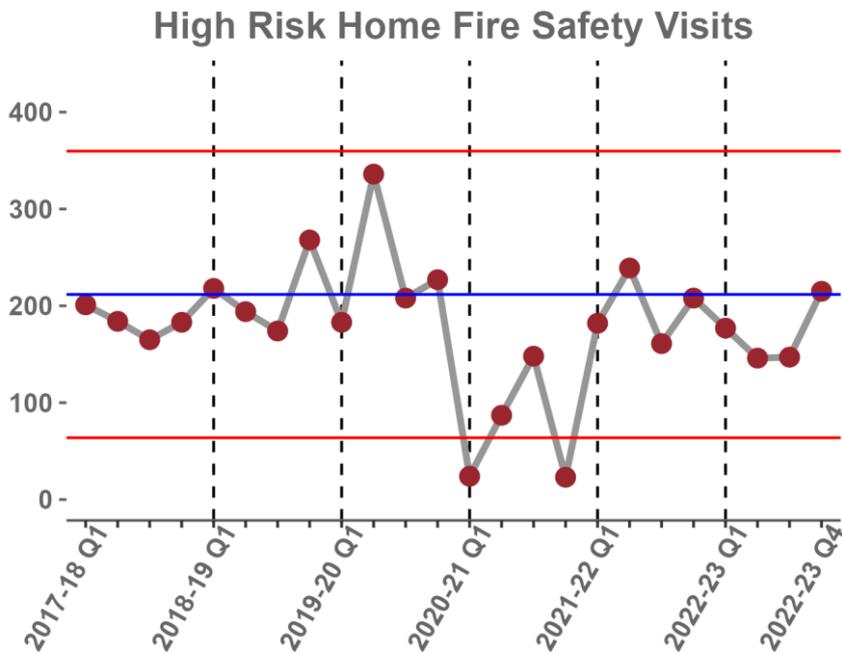
Fiscal Year	Fire Category	Total
2020-21	Dwelling Fire	3
2021-22	Dwelling Fire	1
2022-23	Other Primary Fire	1

Accidental dwelling fire non-fatal casualties have been subject to random variation since 2017-18 Q1. In 2020-21 Q1 non-fatal casualties increased sharply exceeding the upper control limit before falling the following quarter to the other extreme close to the lower control limit. With the exception of the most recent two quarters, from 2020-21 Q2 onwards, figures have remained below average, suggesting a possible decreasing trend. However, from 2022-23 Q3, the figures were above average. More data would be needed to confirm an overall downward trend in the data. National figures have consistently decreased since 2017-18.

In 2020-21, there were a total of 3 fire fatalities, all 3 of which were in dwellings. In 2021-22, there was 1 fire fatality, again in a dwelling. In 2022-23, there was 1 fire fatality, occurring in an 'other' primary fire.



Home Fire Safety Visits in Aberdeen City increased overall from 2017-18 to 2019-20. There was a substantial decrease in Home Fire Safety Visits in 2020-21 Q1, shown by the data point being far below the lower control limit. Figures have slowly increased since then, but remain close to the lower control limit, showing that the number of visits carried out has not returned to levels seen before the pandemic. This is consistent with national patterns in the data.



Similar to overall Home Fire Safety Visit figures, visits that were considered high risk were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with a large reduction seen in 2020-21 Q1. From 2020-21 Q2 onwards, figures have mostly remained below average with 2020-21 Q4 being below

the lower control limit. Overall patterns in 2021-22 and 2022-23 are similar to what was seen before the pandemic in 2017-18 and 2018-19. Nationally, high risk Home Fire Safety Visits decreased substantially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout 2021-22, figures gradually return to figures similar to what was seen pre-pandemic. 2022-23 has seen a reduction in high-risk Home Fire Safety Visits nationally.

### ***How we worked to improve our performance***

The most significant cause of accidental dwelling fires is cooking within the home. Cooking related dwelling fires account for 307 (66%) of the 461 that occurred over the last three years. Data analysis has demonstrated that these types of incidents commonly occur within purpose built flat/maisonettes.

Our focus on addressing this trend is through reenergising existing, and promoting new, early intervention referral pathways and the continual delivery of risk recognition training to a wide network of partners and service providers.

Our Home Fire Safety Visit Programme has been ongoing for many years and allows us to visit homes and provide home fire safety advice. Continuing to develop our referral process for HFSV's is fundamental in ensuring that those who are most vulnerable and at risk from fire are identified and appropriate interventions are undertaken. During the lifetime of this plan a key area of work has been developing our referral processes and increasing the number of referrals from partners.

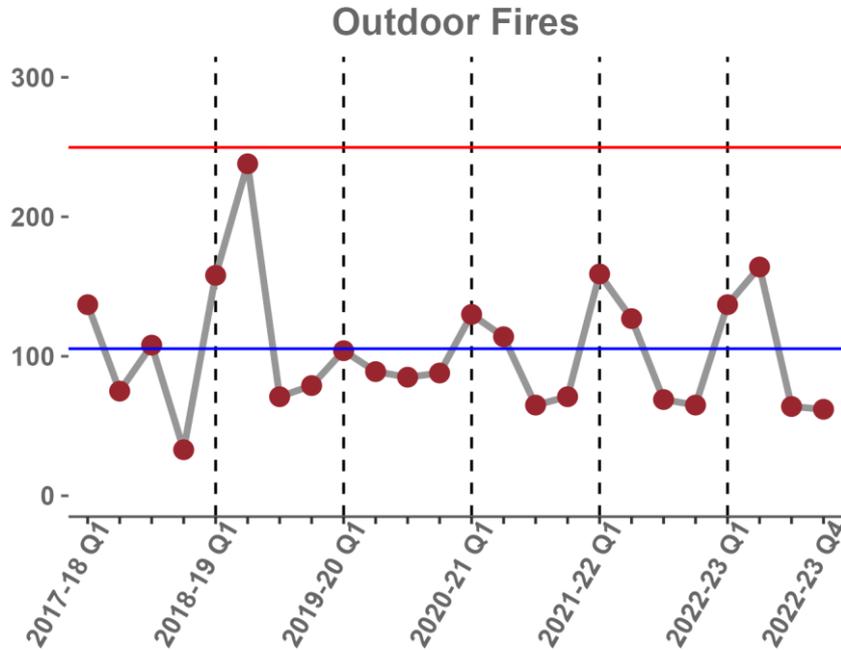
Our new Safe and Well Project looks to build on the current model to incorporate wider health and social care considerations, allowing us to do more for the people of Scotland. As well as providing fire safety advice, Safe and Well visits will allow us to refer high risk individuals to partner organisations for further support to reduce risks identified during our visit. Similarly, our partners will be able to refer individuals who meet the high-risk criteria to receive a home safety visit from us.

A six-month pilot of Safe and Well concluded in August 2022. Members of our Community Action Teams completed the training packages and conducted live Safe and Well Home Safety Visits to high-risk individuals within our communities. Our newly developed home fire safety management system was tested during these visits and, when fully implemented, will enable partnership referrals both to and from SFRS. An implementation plan for Safe and Well visits is currently under development, along with further engagement with relevant health and social care partners to test the secure referral processes.

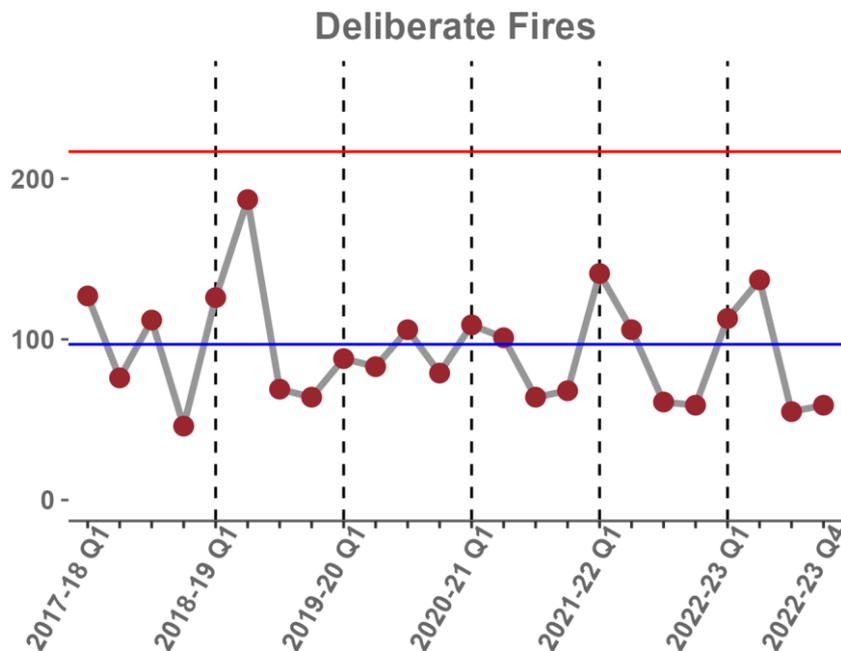
The SFRS also continues to support the introduction of the new fire and smoke detector standard and ensure, where appropriate, those most at risk from fire gain the best opportunity for early warning. This early warning will afford those involved in these types of incidents the best opportunity to evacuate in a timely fashion, notify SFRS and ensure that the physical effects of exposure are reduced.

Local Priority 2: Reducing Deliberate Fires

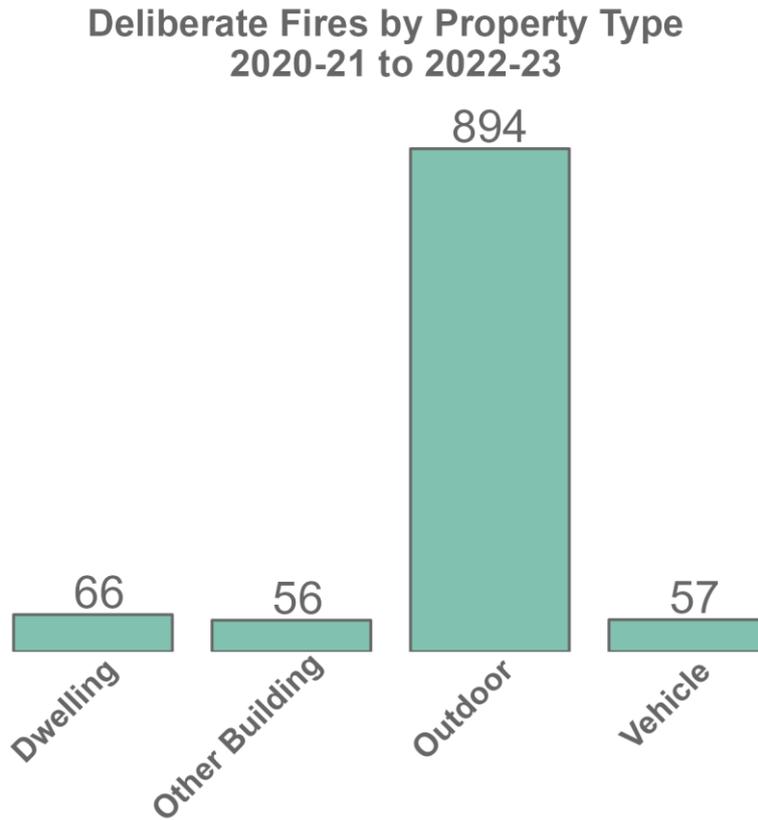
**Performance Data – What the figures told us.**



Outdoor fires have been fluctuating within control limits with no clear overall trend since 2017-18 Q1 with no overall trend being shown for the data. Figures appear to be consistently higher in Q1 and Q2 of each year when compared to other quarters, with all figures in Q1 being on or above average. Again, this indicates a possible seasonal effect with resources focused on developing thematic action plans to target this period. This is consistent with national patterns in the data.



Deliberate fires have been fluctuating within control limits with no clear overall trend since 2017-18 Q1. From 2018-19, figures in Q1 and Q2 of each year appear to be higher than other quarters and are consistently above average each year with the exception of 2019-20 Q1 and 2, where Q3 was above average. This indicates a possible seasonal effect with resources focused on developing thematic action plans to target this period. This is consistent with national patterns in the data.



Between 2020-21 and 2022-23, most deliberate fires have occurred in outdoor settings, with 894 fires in total occurring in this property type over this time. This is followed by dwelling fires (66 in total), vehicle fires (57 in total) and other building fires (56 in total).

### ***How we worked to improve our performance***

Deliberate Fire-Setting within Aberdeen arise predominately from Deliberate Secondary Fires; thus, accounting for 83% of all Deliberate Fires over the past three years. Longer spells of dry weather and increased temperatures can increase the number of deliberate secondary fires and we constantly monitor and review this type of incident so that we can deliver early interventions to reduce the number of fires.

Deliberate fires can be linked to wider anti-social behaviour and during the past three years we have worked with partners in both Community Planning and Community Safety to reduce anti-social behaviour and deliberate fires within the area.

Education is a key partner in reducing these types of incidents and we have worked closely with targeted schools in the area to deliver Hazards and Consequences of Deliberate Fires presentations to pupils.

During this plan we have invested in setting up a number of FireSkills courses, the aim of this is to engage with young people develop their life skills and increase their confidence and resilience while at the same time increasing their awareness around the dangers of setting deliberate fires. Fireskills courses were run in partnership with SFRS, Police Scotland, Scottish Ambulance Service and Aberdeen City Educational Departments.

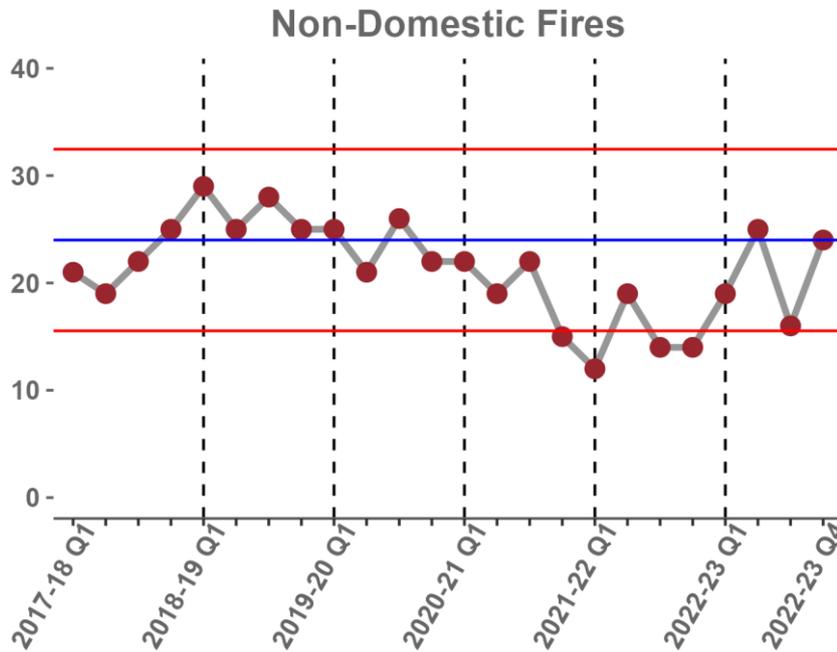
During the courses the students were taught first aid from the Scottish Ambulance Service; personal safety from Police Scotland; how to correctly use SFRS equipment; and how to successfully work as part of a close-knit team to complete a staged rescue exercise at the end of the course. A review of the course highlighted the positive impact and successes and recommended development of the programme to give students the opportunity to achieve a SCQF Level 4 Employability Award. Further courses are planned for 2023-24 within Aberdeen.

SFRS staff also continue to work closely with partners to tackle fire related anti-social behaviour. The SFRS Fire Safety Support and Education programme can be key to reducing these behaviours and repeat offending by our trained advisors engaging with the individuals responsible as we look to reduce repeat offending.

Deliberate Secondary Fire-Setting and Fire Related Anti-Social Behaviour in some ward areas continues to be a significant problem, impacting on both SFRS and partner resources, local community assets and Local Authority budgets. We continue to work closely with partners within the Kincorth, Nigg and Cove ward, to reduce these types of incidents within the Gramps area.

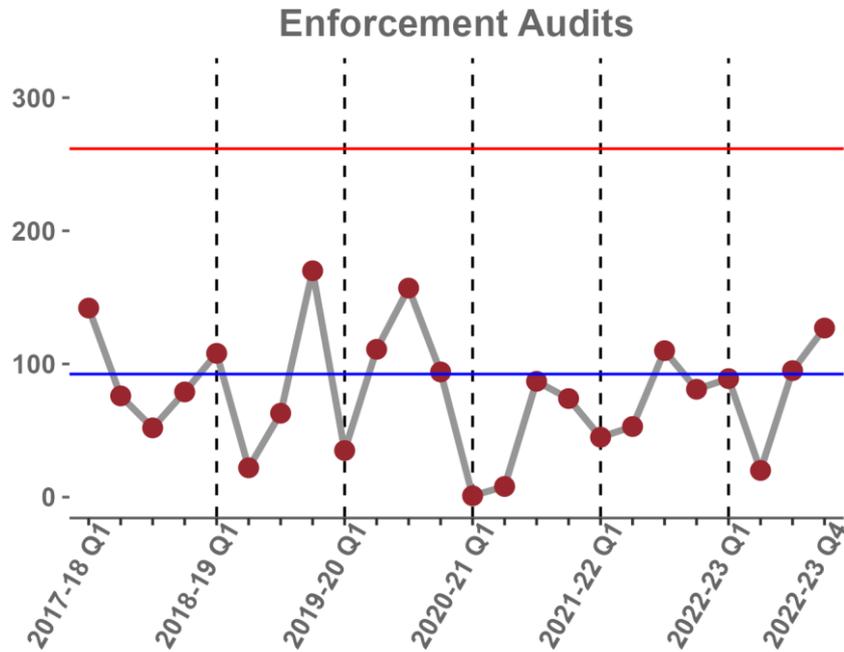
Local Priority 3: Improving Fire Safety in the Business Community

**Performance Data – What the figures told us**



Non-domestic fires have been fluctuating within control limits with no clear overall trend since 2018-19 and 2021-22. Figures decreased substantially between 2020-21 Q2 and 2021-22 Q1, with the figure for 2021-22 Q1 falling below the lower control limit. Figures have remained low since then, with all figures either being below average or falling below the lower control limit, with the exception of 2022-23 Q2 and Q4 suggesting that non-domestic fires may be on an overall downward trend. This downward trend is seen nationally across Scotland.

Non-domestic fires have been fluctuating within control limits with no clear overall trend since non-domestic fires have been fluctuating within control limits with no clear overall trend since



Audit figures were fluctuating within control limits with no clear overall trend between 2017-18 Q1 and 2019-20 Q4. During the Covid-19 pandemic, figures decreased, with all figures for 2020-21 being below average. Since then, figures have returned to pre-pandemic levels. Nationally, audit figures decreased substantially during the Covid-19 pandemic and have mostly remained below average since then.

#### ***How we worked to improve our performance***

All Fire Safety Audit activity within Aberdeen is prioritised on a risk-based approach. We have a cadre of Fire Safety Enforcement Officers and Fire Safety Auditing Officers that are utilised peripatetically to ensure compliance with Policy and Frameworks set by the Service.

We continue to work with owners and occupiers of relevant premises to deliver our Local Enforcement Delivery Plan (LEDP) to support this risk-based approach and increase the safety of business premises within Aberdeen.

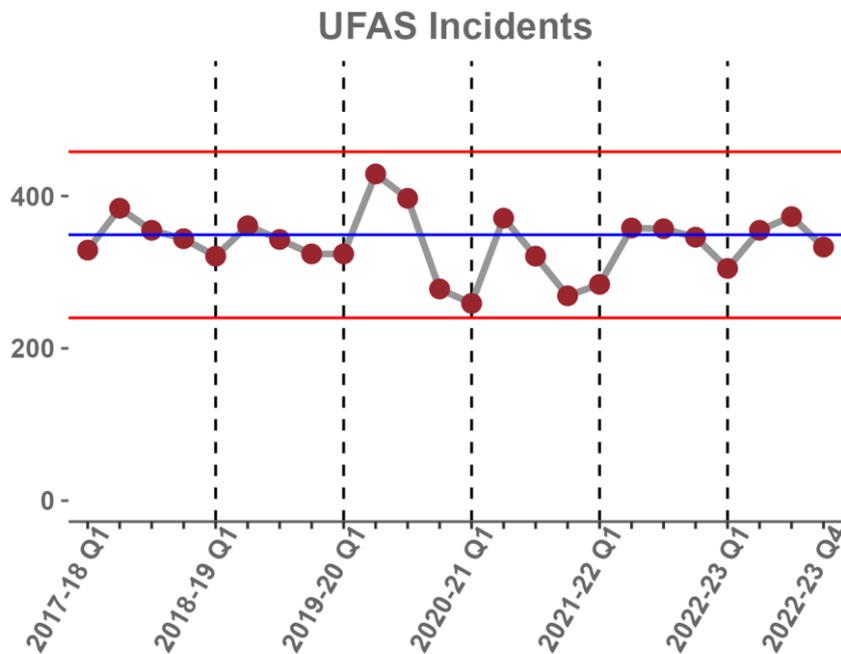
As part of our LEDP, following a fire at relevant premises we carry out Post Fire Audits to provide additional advice and guidance and to ensure that the building is still safe for use. This also gives an opportunity to investigate the cause of the fire and identify any emerging trends, which may support the requirement of a thematic audit programme to be undertaken.

Locally, we also work closely with Aberdeen City Council Licensing Department when licence applications are received, such as Houses of Multiple Occupation, Short Term Lets and larger Public Events, to provide support and guidance, in particular when a breach or deficiency is identified.

Occasionally, formal enforcement action is necessary e.g., an Enforcement Notice requiring works to be undertaken within a specified time-period or a Prohibition Notice prohibiting/restricting the use of the premises (or part of the premises) due to serious and imminent fire safety concerns which pose a risk to life.

Local Priority 4: Reducing Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

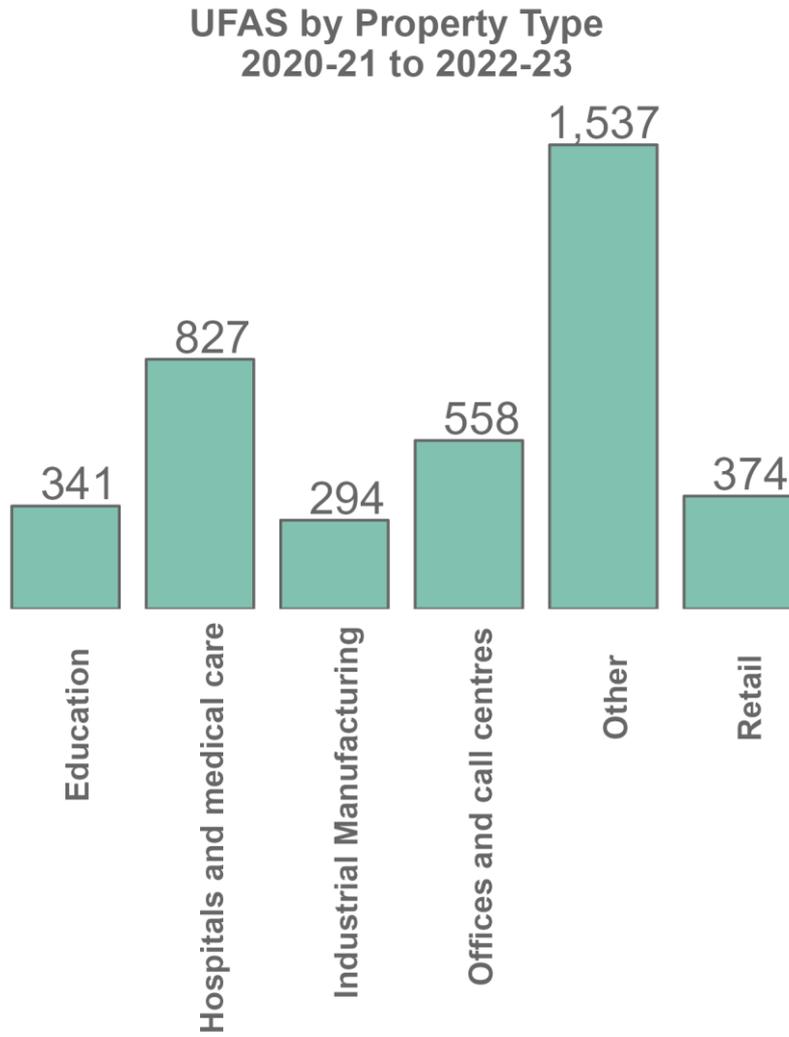
**Performance Data – What the figures told us**



Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) were fluctuating within control limits with no clear overall trend between 2017-18 Q1 and 2019-20 Q2.

Figures decreased during the Covid-19 pandemic, shown by the figure for 2020-21 Q1 being close to the lower control limit. This increased to a figure close to average in Q2 but returned to below average for Q3 and Q4 of 2020-21 and Q1 of 2021-22. During the Covid-19 pandemic, most offices were closed, and home working was encouraged. This meant that less people were in workplace buildings, and so there was less opportunity for an unwanted signal to occur.

From 2021-22 Q2 UFAS figures returned to pre-pandemic levels, mostly slightly above average. This is consistent with national patterns in the data.



Between 2020-21 and 2022-23, most UFAS occurred in property types that fall under the category 'Other', with 1,537 occurring here within this time. This was followed by hospitals and medical care properties (827), Offices and call centres (558) and Retail (374).

### ***How we worked to improve our performance***

Whilst a small number of fire alarm signals generated are due to confirmed fire conditions being present, there are an even greater number of signals generated which when investigated have occurred when no fire conditions have been present.

The impact of responding to Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) incidents causes disruption to the premises working environment and to the range of activities the SFRS undertake. Unnecessary blue light journeys also create additional risks and hazards to firefighters and to the public whilst responding to UFAS incidents and have a detrimental impact on the environment through additional carbon emissions.

Therefore, from 1 July 2023, the SFRS stopped attending automatic fire alarm call outs to commercial business and workplace premises, such as factories, offices, shops and leisure facilities – unless a fire has been confirmed. Duty holders with responsibility for workplace premises should now safely investigate a fire alarm before calling 999, as our control room operators require confirmation of an actual fire, or signs of fire, before sending the nearest resource. SFRS will treat any fire alarm as a sign of fire, other than from a single smoke detector.

This change does not apply to sleeping premises, such as hospitals, care homes, hotels or domestic dwellings who will continue to get an emergency response.

To address the consistent high call rate within hospitals and medical centres, we have introduced a single point of contact within our operational crews for NHS premises. This approach provides direct support and guidance to NHS Grampian in actively reducing UFAS calls. Thus, reducing the subsequent impact on hospital activity.

We also have UFAS Champions in place within the area and they are responsible for monitoring UFAS Incidents locally and making recommendations to the Local Senior Officer for appropriate interventions in line with the SFRS Reducing Unwanted Fire Alarms Policy.

All crews have been trained in the reduction of UFAS and provide advice to occupiers on every occasion that we attend a UFAS incident. Our Fire Safety Enforcement Staff also monitor UFAS calls and take appropriate action at the various stages as stipulated in SFRS Policy.

Local Priority 5: Effective Risk Management and Operational Preparedness

Risk Management and operational preparedness are key areas of work for the SFRS. For Aberdeen City this means;

- Knowing what the risks are and making appropriate plans to ensure we are resilient and informed to respond effectively to any event at that risk.
- Being prepared to respond to national threats or major emergencies.
- Firefighters being trained and equipped to deal with emergencies safely and effectively and our stations being ready to respond.

SFRS defines Operational Intelligence (OI) as operational risk information that is gathered pre-incident and made available at point of requirement. This information will assist the Incident Commander (IC) to formulate a tactical plan and develop a risk assessment when attending emergency incidents and assisting in the effective maintenance of crew, partner, and public safety. Within the Aberdeen City, we currently hold OI risk information for 1353 premises.

Staff Competence.

	Total	Competent	Development	Development Stage		
				Red	Amber	Green
Firefighter	111	69	42	15	12	15
Crew Commander	38	23	15			
Watch Commander	16	10	6			
Senior Manager	7	6	1			

***How we worked to improve our performance***

We have achieved the gathering of Operational Intelligence through a robust inspection process. This process tasks each operational watch with undertaking 7 operational intelligence inspections each 7-week cycle. These are a combination of new inspections and re-visits to validate the currency of the information held.

As a performance target we aim to complete 420 operational intelligence visits across Aberdeen during each reporting year.

To ensure that we are prepared to respond to national threats or major emergencies. We undertake a minimum of one multi-agency exercise per quarter. This process ceased during the COVID 19 pandemic due to national restrictions. With easing of COVID 19 restrictions, we have undertaken multi-agency training in relation to High-rise fires, Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN), transport incidents including Air, Rail and Sea. These types of exercises allowed for the testing of all partner agencies responses to such incident types and collective learning.

To ensure that our personnel are competently trained and equipped to deal with all emergencies safely, we have worked towards supporting new and existing employees to achieve operational competence. This has been achieved through our robust Training for Operational Competence program (TfOC), including our in-development firefighters

actively working towards their Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) and Modern Apprenticeship (MA).

The last three years has also seen the introduction of our dedicated 'Rope Rescue' teams located at Altens Fire Station and Special Operations Response Unit (SORU) located at North Anderson Drive Fire Station. These significant investments ensure that our Incident Commander are adequately equipped to support and resolve complex emergencies.

## **Conclusion**

The current Local Fire and Rescue Plan has served us well and we are making progress against the priorities that were agreed.

Staff within the area are committed to making a full commitment to making our communities safer within Aberdeen.

We have made significant progress in relation to the delivery of Home Fire Safety Visits and Community Safety and Engagement activity within the area since the beginning of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, this has been achieved through strong visible leadership, staff engagement, commitment to partnership working and developing our partnerships, and a willingness from all staff to contribute to making Aberdeenshire a safer place to live, work and visit.

From an incident response perspective, we have responded along with partners to emergencies throughout Aberdeen and the wider Grampian area, through our dedicated specialist resources. We will continue to build on this by working with partners through civil contingencies and the Local Resilience Partnership to ensure that joint training and exercising is conducted for the risks within Aberdeen and that staff are confident and competent in the roles that they undertake.

Having considered our current priorities alongside the Service Strategic Plan and the local needs of Aberdeen, the high-level priorities are still relevant, with some minor amendments.

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the following priorities are taken forward in the new Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Aberdeen City area:

Priority 1: Domestic Fire Safety and Unintentional Harm in the Home

Priority 2: Non-Fire Emergencies and respond to the impact of Climate Change

Priority 3: Deliberate Fire Setting

Priority 4: Non-Domestic Fire Safety

Priority 5: Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

Priority 6: Operational Preparedness and Community Resilience