

Workforce Resourcing & Development Update

The Authority continues to implement a range of new ways of working, to enhance operational resilience and improve staff training, learning and development.

These measures aim to; increase appliance availability, help navigate workforce planning challenges and futureproof the Service whilst minimising the potential impact on the workforce.

All of these developments promote staff retention, increase levels of engagement, and improves communication. Resulting in a confident workforce that feels valued and invested in.

It ensures the Authority has the right people, with the right skills, knowledge, and experience, in the right roles, to deliver its service to the Community.

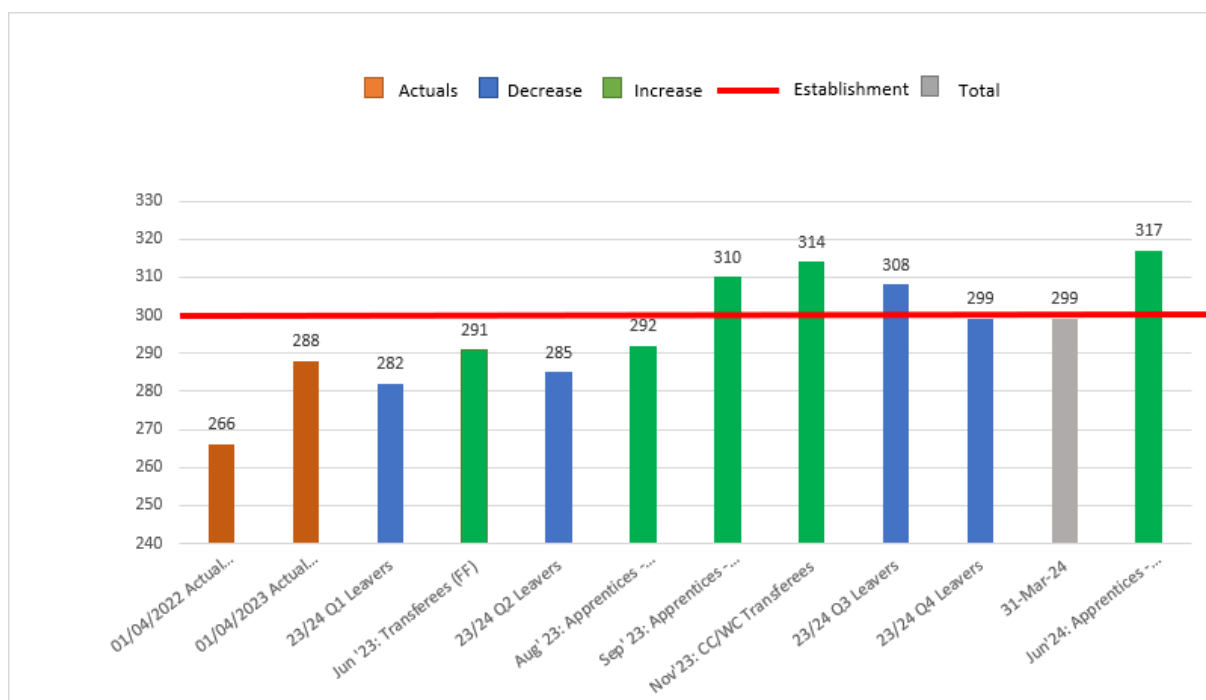
These are the Authority's strategic workforce and succession planning processes, which incorporate current Public Safety Plan requirements and horizon scanning of likely future external and internal challenges.

Workforce Planning:

The workforce planning group meets regularly to review current recruitment activity and forecast the impact current recruitment campaigns may have against the budgeted establishment and determine the future priorities.

Outcomes from this are translated into timely interventions to ensure the Authority continues to meet workforce capacity requirements and build resilience. Details of these interventions are included within the recruitment and development centre/selection process sections of this report. These areas provide an opportunity to refresh the workforce through the identification of people; internally and where required externally to fill identified key positions.

Figure 1: Current forecasting for operational recruitment against the budgeted establishment.



The next steps are to develop more complex scenarios which will produce a similar forward-looking graph however breaking this down by each rank within the operational establishment and layering on top expected retirements and assess the impacts of internal promotional processes based on trends from previous success rates. The evidence-based modelling will enable the Authority to plan future recruitment intakes with an informed and pro-active approach.

Operational Establishment:

The Authority is trialling new ways of working relating to its operational establishment for this financial year – 2023/24. It is reviewing the balance of roles to determine where changes can be made which will improve immediate operational capability and provide additional career pathway opportunities.

These aim to increase supervisory management capacity across the Service to assist operational resourcing, station management duties and developing new staff.

Recruitment:

The Authority has been pro-active in its approach to recruitment and working hard to deliver the increase in establishment to 300 operational roles.

It has been a blended approach to the campaigns consisting of; firefighter apprentices, external and internal firefighter transferees and external and internal supervisory manager transferees.

Social media has been integral in these campaigns reaching a wider audience and the investment in the Marketing and Communications team and the tools they have available to develop content have proven invaluable.

The Authority strives to attract a diverse pool of candidates when recruiting to vacancies, with increased attendance at many opens days and careers events at varied locations across the County and are always looking to adapt ways of recruiting which include working with the local Mosques and hopefully the Sikh Temples in the near future.

Paid social media advertising has been trialled across Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram to bolster recruitment marketing. Resulting in the recruitment adverts reaching over 400,000 people and generating over 8,000 advert link clicks. (*data all recruitment campaigns from 1 April 2023 - 11 Aug 2023). This would not have been achieved without the introduction of a Digital Marketing Apprentice injecting much needed additional resource to the Marketing and Communications team.

Apprenticeships:

Following the update presented to members at the Fire Authority in February 2023, the success of the Authority's apprenticeship programme continues to grow.

The apprenticeship programmes offered by the Authority demonstrate the level of investment in new and existing staff across the service which enables succession planning, resilience, and future proofing.

The Authority is now demonstrating further efficiencies through the use of apprenticeships. Due to being effective in fully utilising the levy, the Authority is now benefiting from co-funding arrangements with the department of education, where they fund 95% of the apprenticeship cost and the authority funds the other 5%.

This has developed further as the Organisational Development department have identified further funding opportunities. The Authority has secured a transfer of levy arrangement with Santander – one of Milton Keynes largest employers - to fund the enrolment of two members of staff on to the Cranfield Level 7 apprenticeship and Santander will transfer the full levy cost to fund this. Discussions are being had with Santander to see if the potential is there to expand this arrangement with other apprenticeship enrolments, particularly focusing on Firefighter apprentices and a potential sponsorship scheme. It is hoped this will lead to future partnerships with other levy gifters.

Assessment, Development and Selection Processes:

The Authority's workforce development programme, continues to ensure replenished development pools at each level, resulting in staff with the required skills to fulfil the roles when needed.

An in-year review was undertaken on the Authority's Operational Promotional Procedure to recognise feedback from staff in relation to processes contained within it. In response to this, temporary amendments to the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE) requirements were implemented to enable a wider pool of applicants through the promotional process, this had a positive impact, and resulted in an increase in the number of applications.

Promotional processes have been held at all levels in the last 12 months, including for the first time at Strategic Manager level. This development centre formed part of the Authority's succession plans by identifying future strategic managers and then

providing a personal development plan preparing them for the roles when they become available.

The promotional processes were opened up to include external applicants and it was positive to see an increase in the number of external applications received, one of which resulted in the appointment of the new Area Commander.

The Authority is fully committed to Equality and Diversity, standing for inclusion, diversity and respect, recognising equality and fairness is fundamental to everything, making it crucial to tailor any development processes to cater for a vastly neurodiverse workforce. Thus, embracing the Authority's objective to embed Equality and Diversity into everything it does internally and externally, encouraging development throughout a variety of levels.

Upon review of the core components of the development and selection process, changes have been made to interview stage. Prior to the interview, candidates will be given preparation time with the interview questions, this is not a trick it enables candidates to consider their responses and set them up for success. Candidates are encouraged to use this time wisely to think of relevant examples they can use to demonstrate their ability and knowledge. They are able to make notes, which they can bring into the interview.

It is important to consider if candidates would like to request arrangements that will assist them in making applications for and attending processes, therefore always ensuring that if there are any adaptations or adjustments that can be made to assist them during the process, then it is a priority to do so. Any requests for reasonable adjustments received are treated with the utmost confidence.

360 Feedback:

The Authority has launched its new 360 Feedback process. This is currently being trialled within the senior management team and will later be rolled out to middle/dept managers.

360 feedback is an important development tool for leaders. It can highlight areas of strength which may not be recognised as well as areas for development.

The 360 Feedback has been created with bespoke competencies mapped to the NFCC Leadership Framework which sets out and defines the leadership behaviours needed at every level in the Fire and Rescue Service. The Framework focusses on

four key areas: Personal Impact, Outstanding Leadership, Organisational Effectiveness and Service Delivery.

Following feedback and evaluation of the trial, the 360 Feedback tool will be built into staff development processes.

National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Supervisory Leadership Development Programme:

Following the launch of the NFCC's Supervisory Leadership Development Plan staff are being offered the opportunity to enrol on the programme as a trial. This is open to ALL staff (operational and support) who are aspiring or existing supervisory leaders.

The supervisory leadership development programme (SLDP), is a self-directed development programme, designed exclusively and collaboratively between the NFCC and CMI (Chartered Management Institute). It offers supervisory leaders across the fire and rescue service, a wealth of support for their day-to-day leadership and management activities along with access to learning materials to support any identified development areas.

The programme has been designed exclusively to develop knowledge, skills, and behaviours for every existing, new, and aspiring supervisory leader across all areas of the UK fire and rescue service, regardless of role, contract type or location.

The whole programme has been developed around the NFCC Leadership Framework, which clearly defines the leadership behaviours required at each level of leadership within the UK fire and rescue service.

Feedback will be sought from those undertaking the programme, to identify where this may sit in the future, as part of the BFRS Staff Development Pathway project.

NFCC are currently in the process of developing the Middle Leadership (MLP) Programme which is due to launch in 2024. Expressions of interest have already been received for this and it will also be rolled out to staff.

Training Needs Analysis:

The Training Needs Analysis (TNA) process assesses the need for staff training at least annually. This TNA is translated into prioritised learning programmes, submitted by department managers, approved by the Training Strategy Group and scrutinised to ensure alignment with business priorities, business continuity succession plans and approved budgets.

In April 2023, the Training Strategy Group met to review the proposal for allocating funding against the 2023/24 TNA and were able to approve £227,800.00 of investment into staff training.

Figure 2.

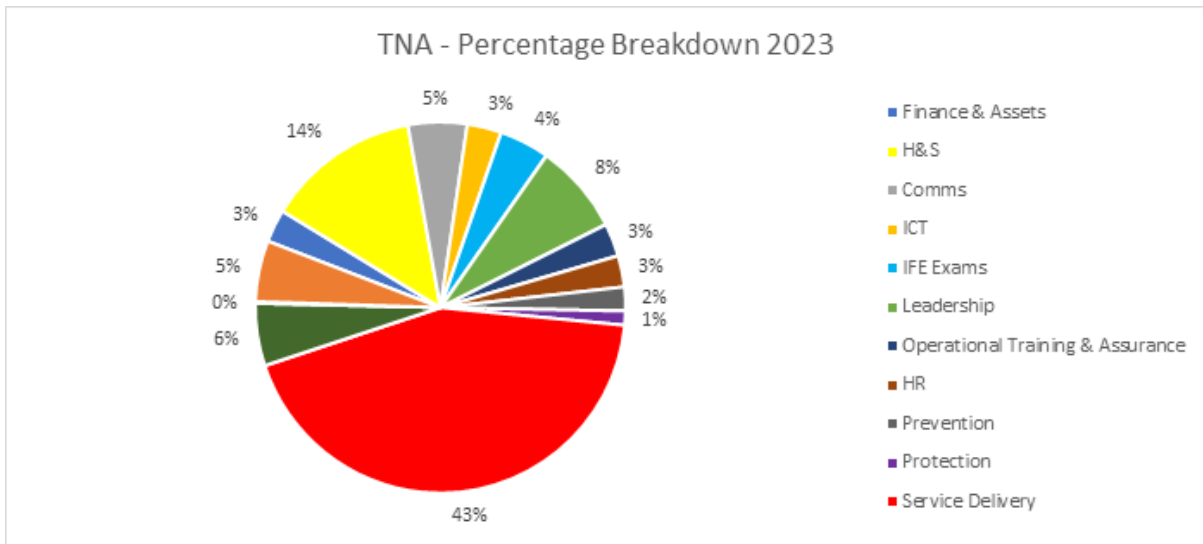


Figure 2 demonstrates the investment in training across the Service, with a priority being Service Delivery (operational training) to enhance operational resourcing and resilience.

Figure 3.

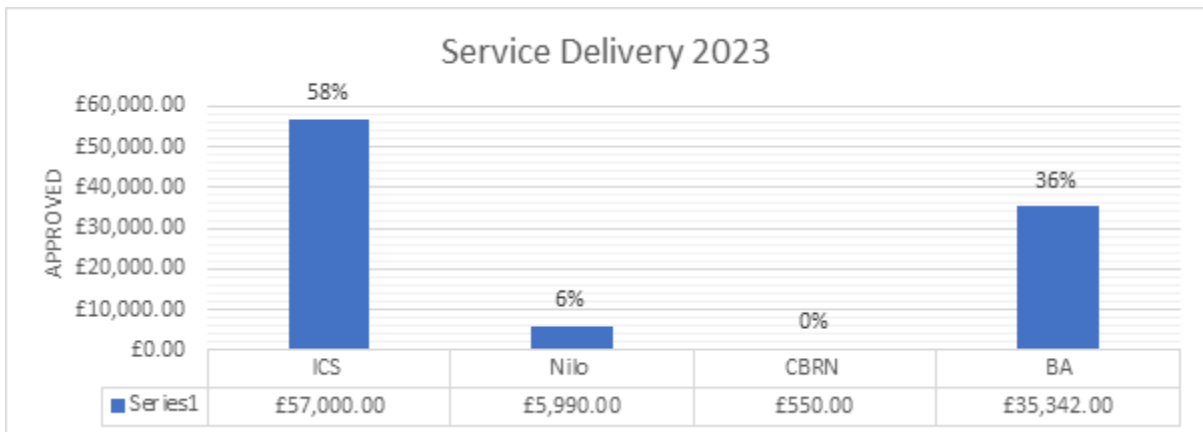


Figure 3 breaks down the investment into Service Delivery further, with priority training areas being Incident Command (ICS) and Breathing Apparatus (BA).

In addition to the above, work is ongoing seeking collaborative opportunities with neighbouring Services to train staff on incident command as well as scoping options to bring this training in house.

A review has been undertaken of the process to identify and prioritise staff to attend driver training. The revised process is working well and those on the waiting list for training have all been allocated courses. An external training provider has been secured if needed to increase training capacity, alongside the submission of a growth bid as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2024/25 to increase the number of driver instructors within the Service.

BFRS Staff Development Pathway Project:

The BFRS Staff Development Pathway Project is being designed to align to the National Chief Councils (NFCC's) Core Learning pathway and NFCC Leadership Framework.

The pathway will provide clarity to staff looking to develop themselves either within their existing role, or with aspiration for the next level role - within BFRS or another organisation.

It will also incorporate the two recently launched professional fire standards relating to Leadership and people: Leading the service and leading and developing people. These standards have been developed to support services in strengthening professionalism & leadership at all levels of their organisation, encouraging more positive working environments for the benefit of their people and the community they serve.

The pathway will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of existing managers as well as provide development opportunities and pathways for future managers and leaders of the organisation.

The objectives/benefits of the Staff Development Pathway are:

- Improved capacity, capability and resilience of managers and therefore, the organisation,
- Improved effectiveness of existing managers, directly impacting on improved organisational performance,
- Improve engagement levels of staff, providing a clear, transparent and consistent development pathway,
- Contributes to improved retention of staff,
- Staff feel supported in their development and have confidence in the training, learning and development provided for career progression,
- Increase attraction and engagement from staff with career development.

The project mandate was approved at the Business Transformation Board in March 2023 and an additional role – Watch Commander Organisational Development – approved as part of the In-Year Bid process to provide the resource to lead and develop the pathway and provide coaching and mentoring to staff.

It is anticipated the project will take 18 months to complete and then will become business as usual and become the foundation for the Authority's staff development processes.