

Emergency Services News Briefing

November 2025



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Introduction

In this edition of our news briefing, we draw attention to some of the key developments and publications in the sector, including policing reforms and accountability, workforce wellbeing and updated statistics.



Police

State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2024–25

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Andy Cooke, has published his third annual assessment, highlighting both progress and persistent challenges in policing. While reforms such as the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee and proposals for a National Centre of Policing show promise, their success depends on sufficient funding and sustained commitment.

Key concerns include outdated technology, poor data management, and the lack of multi-year funding and capital grants, which hinder long-term planning. The police allocation formula remains unchanged since 2013, contributing to unfair funding distribution. Rising demand and cost pressures continue to strain forces, despite increased funding.

Sir Andy noted signs of stabilising public confidence but emphasised the need for visible leadership, innovation, and better workforce morale. No new recommendations were made this year to allow forces time to implement existing reforms.

However, the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) has responded critically to the State of Policing report, warning that reforms risk failure without proper funding and meaningful implementation. The PFEW expressed concern that the report underrepresents the daily pressures faced by frontline officers.

Key issues highlighted include:

- Unmanageable investigative workloads.
- Rising violence against officers.
- 90% of funding for police treatment centres is paid directly by officers.
- New data also reveals a troubling link between misconduct investigations and officer suicides, prompting calls for welfare and accountability to be addressed jointly.



Questions for committee's consideration

- How is the Audit Committee ensuring oversight of the implementation of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee and other reform initiatives?

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Chief Constable Gavin Stephens, Chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), has responded to the State of Policing 2024–25 report, acknowledging positive strides in service delivery while stressing the urgent need for reform.

Stephens highlighted that a decade of underinvestment has left police forces under-resourced and unable to consistently meet public expectations amid increasingly complex criminal threats. He warned that the current policing model is unsustainable and called for bold reform to ensure a modern, cost-effective service. He commented:

“That is why urgent reform is absolutely essential if UK policing is to be able to deliver a modern, fit-for-purpose and cost-effective service to the public. We look forward to the government White Paper on Police Reform setting out a bold and ambitious vision for policing, so we can be more effective in responding to rapidly changing threats to community safety”.

“Forces across England and Wales have made good progress in delivering better neighbourhood policing. Including increasing visibility of police on the streets, giving communities and businesses a greater voice and influence over local policing priorities.”

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Police service progress in its response to group-based child sexual exploitation

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary of Fire and Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) latest report highlights progress in police handling of group-based child sexual exploitation (CSE), with improved investigations and increased use of specially trained officers. Most forces now use a common definition of organised networks, though inconsistent understanding and lack of national guidance hinder data reliability.

Cultural change programmes are underway to reduce victim-blaming, and multi-agency efforts, such as Operation Makesafe, are helping frontline workers identify exploitation. However, national systems for flagging CSE cases remain inadequate, and forces are urged to develop better intelligence profiles using partner data.

Six new recommendations have been issued alongside four outstanding ones from the original 2023 inspection report.

The effectiveness of diverting children from the criminal justice system

A joint inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation and HMICFRS has found that while youth out-of-court disposals (OoCDs) are increasingly used to divert children from formal prosecution, the system remains fragmented and inconsistent across England and Wales. Key findings include:

- In 2024, 13,868 children were cautioned or sentenced, down 67% from 2014. First-time entrants to the justice system fell by 65% since 2013, totalling 8,278 in 2023.
- Youth cautions and conditional cautions had a 21.7% reoffending rate, compared to 58.5% for youth rehabilitation orders.
- Safeguarding referrals were made in fewer than half of relevant cases for the victims, raising concerns about child and victim protection.
- Police often issued OoCDs without the Youth Justice Service (YJS) involvement, and guidance such as the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) child gravity matrix was inconsistently applied.
- Many children had complex needs, including neurodiversity and care experience, yet support was often delayed or insufficient. Only 38% of children had effective exit plans.

The report calls for stronger national frameworks, improved data systems, and more consistent multi-agency collaboration to ensure children receive timely, tailored support and to uphold public confidence in youth justice.

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services to leave role.

Sir Andy Cooke has announced that he will be leaving his role as His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services in March 2026. Sir Andy has led the inspectorate since 2022 and has a nearly 40-year long career in UK policing and law enforcement. Sir Andy Cooke said:

"It has been a great honour to serve in this important role and the pinnacle of my 40-year career. I am immensely proud of the work undertaken by the inspectorate and together with our dedicated staff, we have supported innumerable improvements across both policing and fire and rescue. Both forces and services are in a better position than in which I found them. However, there remains much more to do, both for individual forces and services to get a grip on performance, and systemic changes which need to be led by the government and other central bodies."

Change in compensation guidance for injured officers

Following advocacy by the PFEW and the National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS), the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) has revised its guidance to ensure fairer treatment of emergency workers injured in the line of duty. The updated guidance, published in October 2025, now instructs decision-makers to fully consider whether violent or reckless resistance during arrest constitutes a crime of violence. This change strengthens the basis for compensation claims and acknowledges the operational risks faced by emergency personnel.

Police pay award announcement

In August 2025, the government announced a 4.2% pay increase for police officers, aligning with the recommendation of the independent pay review body. While this exceeds inflation, it only partially addresses the long-term erosion of police pay. The NPCC welcomed the award, recognising the demanding nature of policing and the need to retain skilled personnel amid rising threats and operational complexity.

An additional £120 million in funding has been allocated to support the pay increase. With over 85% of police budgets spent on salaries, the NPCC stressed that full funding is essential to sustain frontline services and continue investment in neighbourhood policing and technology.

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) assessment of how well police forces record reports of crime.

HMICFRS's latest PEEL spotlight report highlights significant progress in crime recording across England and Wales. In the year ending 31 March 2025, over 5.3 million crimes were recorded, with accuracy rising from 80.5% in 2014 to 94.8%.

All recommendations from the 2014 inspection have now been implemented, contributing to better resource allocation and victim support. However, an estimated 285,000 crimes still went unrecorded last year, with violent crimes, particularly harassment, stalking, and coercive behaviour, being the least well recorded. These account for 37.9% of unrecorded violent offences and disproportionately affect women and girls.

Only 78.1% of crimes are recorded within 24 hours, and inconsistencies remain in recording domestic abuse, vulnerable victims, and antisocial behaviour. HMICFRS has issued three new recommendations focused on accuracy, timeliness, and scrutiny, alongside four existing areas for improvement.

Police Federation press for urgent reforms

The PFEW has intensified its engagement with Parliament, calling for urgent reforms to address the growing crisis in police pay, retention, and officer wellbeing. At recent party conferences, the PFEW highlighted that officers have suffered a real-terms pay cut of over 20% since 2010, with the latest 4.2% pay award failing to match inflation. A police constable now earns at least £10,000 less than a nurse or teacher with similar experience.

Resignations have surged by 140% over five years, with projections indicating over 10,000 officers could leave annually by 2027. Assaults on officers have risen nearly 40% since 2015, with more than 41,000 incidents recorded last year.

PFEW is advocating for:

- Closure of the 21% pay gap since 2010.
- Reform of the Police Remuneration Review Body to allow binding arbitration.
- Mandatory reporting of officer suicides and trauma.
- Fully funded mental health and rehabilitation centres.
- Stronger legal powers under the Road Traffic Act to improve officer safety.



Questions for committee's consideration

- What assurance does the Audit Committee have that controls are in place to ensure accurate and timely crime recording, especially for violent and domestic abuse offences?

Police funding for England and Wales

The Home Office has published a consolidated report detailing police funding in England and Wales from the financial year ending March 2016 through to March 2026. The funding for the year ended 31 March 2026:

- Up to £19,892m in funding has been agreed for policing in England and Wales.
- There is an overall funding increase of up to £1,230m compared to the previous financial year in nominal terms, which equates to up to £736m in real terms (adjusted for inflation).
- Total funding for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) will increase in nominal terms by up to 6.8% (£1,121m) compared to the previous year.



Mandatory recording of suicides

The PFEW is urging legislative reform to mandate the recording of suicides and attempted suicides among police personnel. At least 100 officers and staff have taken their own lives between January 2022 and May 2025, according to Freedom of Information data. Over half of those who died were under investigation at the time, highlighting a critical link between misconduct proceedings and mental health deterioration.

PFEW is proposing amendments to the Crime and Policing Bill and advocating for inclusion of suicide data under Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) regulations. The Federation also calls for minimum mandatory wellbeing standards across all 43 forces, including psychological risk assessments, improved line manager training, and consistent mental health support.

Multi-agency operation on organised immigration crime

In September 2025, UK law enforcement launched Operation Lockstream, the first multi-agency crackdown led by the Organised Immigration Crime Domestic Taskforce, targeting organised immigration crime across England and Wales.

The operation involved coordinated efforts from police forces, Border Force, Immigration Enforcement, HMRC, the National Crime Agency, and others. Activities included roadside stops, coastal patrols, airport checks, and inspections of cash-intensive businesses suspected of illegal employment and money laundering.

Key outcomes:

- 5,516 individuals questioned.
- 68 arrests, including 51 for immigration offences.
- 34 people refused entry to the UK.
- 36 false documents seized.
- 1,204 vehicles, vessels and flights stopped and searched.
- £216,000 recovered through cash seizures, penalties, and fines.

Organised immigration crime is often linked to drug trafficking, modern slavery, and human trafficking. The Taskforce aims to disrupt criminal networks exploiting migrants and to create a hostile environment for offenders.



Questions for committee's consideration

- How is the force responding to calls for mandatory suicide recording and wellbeing standards?

County Lines Strategic Threat Assessment

The NPCC and National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC) have published the latest County Lines Strategic Threat Assessment, covering April 2024 to March 2025. Over 6,500 county lines are currently active across England, Scotland, and Wales. While the overall threat remains stable, the business model continues to evolve, with increased use of social media and encrypted apps to distribute drugs, particularly cannabis and party drugs, via postal networks.

Key findings include:

- 73.5% of county lines offenders are linked to violence or weapons offences.
- 2,659 children were recorded as exploited, though actual figures are likely higher.
- An estimated 11,600 children are going missing and at risk of exploitation.
- 44% of cuckooing victims are women, many with mental health or substance misuse issues.
- Enforcement efforts led to 6,000+ arrests and 2,300 lines closed since July 2024.
- During the latest Intensification Week, 96 firearms and 466 bladed weapons were seized.
- Hospital admissions for sharp object assaults among under-25s in exporter areas fell by 38%.

The report also notes a decline in child charges, reflecting a shift toward recognising exploited youth as victims. New legislation on child criminal exploitation, cuckooing, and coerced concealment is expected in 2026 to strengthen the policing response.

NPCC launches partnership with techUK

A strategic partnership between the NPCC and techUK has been launched to support the aims of the National Policing Digital Strategy 2025–2030. This collaboration will strengthen ties between policing and the technology sector, promoting ethical, transparent, and proportionate use of digital tools to enhance public safety and modernise police services.

With over 1,100 techUK member organisations, the partnership will facilitate expert-led innovation through working groups, forums, and joint initiatives. Lead officers from the NPCC emphasised the importance of cyber resilience, evidence-based solutions, and practical applications of science and technology to address persistent challenges in policing and improve outcomes for communities.

Change of the use of force test for misconduct cases

The government has announced a change to the legal test used in police misconduct cases involving use of force, reverting from the civil law test to the criminal law test. This means officers will be judged based on whether they honestly believed force was necessary at the time, rather than being assessed with hindsight. The move follows an independent review by Sir Adrian Fulford and Tim Godwin, which found the current system undermines officer confidence and morale, particularly among firearms officers. The change aims to restore clarity and fairness while maintaining accountability.

The reform will apply to all use-of-force scenarios, including self-defence, and will be legislated following consultation with the Police Advisory Board. Additional measures include anonymity for firearms officers until conviction, faster charging decisions, and strengthened victim rights. Police chiefs have also been granted greater powers to dismiss unfit officers. A public consultation on the standard of proof in unlawful killing inquests and a broader review of accountability timeliness are planned.

Taser 10 guidance and training

The College of Policing has introduced new guidance and training for the Taser 10, an advanced model approved for frontline use. The upgraded taser aims to improve officer safety and public protection while ensuring minimal use of force.

To support implementation, a 'Train the Trainer' programme will be delivered to up to 140 instructors over the next year. The training incorporates virtual reality simulations and emphasises de-escalation techniques. Updated authorised professional practice (APP) sets clear standards for safe and accountable use, reinforcing public trust and ensuring officers are prepared to the highest professional standards.



Questions for committee's consideration

- What assurance does the Audit Committee have that cyber resilience is being embedded into operational planning?
- What assurance is provided that systems are secure and fit for purpose?

Questions for committee's consideration

- What steps are being taken to prepare for the shift of police and fire governance/powers in your locality, and is the Audit Committee sighted on these arrangements?
- Have you agreed what scrutiny and governance arrangements will be in place under the new arrangements?

Mayors Poised to Take on Policing Powers in England's Devolution Drive

England's evolving devolution agenda is reshaping local governance, with plans to establish powerful Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs) across the country. These new bodies will hold wide-ranging responsibilities over public services, including a significant shift: transferring Police and Crime, and Police, (Fire) and Crime Commissioners (P(F)CCs) functions to elected mayors. Five priority areas are set to elect mayors and potentially transfer Police (Fire) and Crime Commissioner (P(F)CC) functions by May 2026.

The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) has published the "English devolution and the transfer of police and crime powers" document to help manage the transfer of powers and provided guidance.

Hillsborough Law will support better police standards and accountability

Police and Crime Commissioners and deputy mayors have long called for stronger legal safeguards around transparency in policing—especially the introduction of a duty of candour. While the College of Policing's Code of Practice already requires chief officers to promote openness, new legislation will extend this duty to all officers and staff, with potential criminal consequences for breaches. This marks a vital step toward changing policing culture and ensuring that, when things go wrong, the truth is not hidden. From Hillsborough to the Post Office and infected blood scandals, we've seen how institutions can fail the public by protecting reputations over honesty. The Public Office (Accountability) Bill, known as the Hillsborough Law, will bring clarity and accountability, setting clear expectations for transparency across policing.

Big changes are on the horizon for policing in England and Wales, with the government set to unveil reform proposals, in an upcoming White Paper, to provide:

- A rare opportunity to transform policing for the next generation.
- Driven by evidence of what truly works in practice.
- Empowered by using the best technology.
- Focused on preventing crime and solving it effectively.

The APCC, representing PCCs and deputy mayors, is actively working with government and policing bodies to ensure these reforms deliver real impact. Accountability must remain at the heart of this transformation, serving the public interest every step of the way.

Questions for committee's consideration

- What steps are being taken to prepare for the implementation of the Hillsborough Law and the duty of candour?

Annual Victims Survey 2024

A landmark survey by the Victims' Commissioner reveals significant dissatisfaction among victims regarding their treatment and confidence in the criminal justice system.

- Only 42% of victims believe they can achieve justice.
- Just 46% express confidence in the system's effectiveness.
- Only 51% believe the system is fair.

Many victims report being denied a voice at key stages with some refused the opportunity to read their Victim Personal Statement in court and only 14% were aware of their right to challenge decisions to drop their case.

Delays, poor communication, and lack of support are contributing to victim disengagement, and a growing number of victims are withdrawing from the justice process to protect their wellbeing.

The APCC Joint Leads for Victims Clare Moody and Matthew Scott said:

"These findings are extremely concerning but, sadly, unsurprising. We know victims feel failed by the criminal justice system, trust and confidence is still too low and many victims who do report a crime feel they have to step away from the process because of the time – too often now several years – it is taking to get cases to trial. Such delays resulting from court backlogs compound the trauma of being a victim in the first place which understandably makes victims feel their needs are anything but central to the criminal justice process.

"Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Deputy Mayors are responsible for putting in place appropriate support for victims and we are committed to ensuring that support is available. Funding pressures and increased demand are making this increasingly challenging, so we reiterate that long term, stable funding is needed to help victims cope and recover and support them in navigating their way through the criminal justice process."



Questions for committee's consideration

- How is the Audit Committee provided with assurance that the force is responding to the findings of the Annual Victims Survey, particularly around delays, communication, and support?

New powers for police forces to put conditions on repeat protests

The Home Office has announced new police powers to manage repeat protest activity, allowing forces to consider the cumulative impact of previous demonstrations when imposing conditions. Amendments to sections 12 and 14 of the Public Order Act 1986 will enable officers to restrict protests that repeatedly disrupt communities, including relocating events or banning them outright. Breaches of these conditions may result in arrest and prosecution. The move follows concerns about public safety, particularly within the Jewish community, and aims to balance the right to protest with the need for community protection.

During recent protests, nearly 500 individuals were arrested, primarily for supporting the proscribed group Palestine Action. The government is also advancing measures in the Crime and Policing Bill, including bans on fireworks, flares, face coverings, and climbing war memorials during protests. Police forces are working with the Community Security Trust to support 538 Jewish community sites, and ministers are encouraging local authorities to use existing powers to limit protest activity and safeguard vulnerable groups.

Hate crime statistics in England and Wales for the year ending March 2025

The latest data on police-recorded hate crimes has been published by the Home Office. The total hate crimes recorded by police in England and Wales (excluding the Metropolitan Police Service) for the year ending March 2025 was 115,990, a 2% increase on the previous year. This included:

- Race-based hate crimes increased by 6% and religious hate crimes increased by 3% over the past year.
- Offences against Muslims rose by 19%, with a notable spike following the Southport murders and related disorder.
- There were falls in the other strands of hate crimes reported in the past year including sexual orientation (2% decrease), disability (8% decrease) and transgender (11% decrease).

The estimated hate crime incidents, from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), combined year ending March 2023 to year ending March 2025 surveys, showed that there were an estimated 176,000 incidents of hate crime a year.

New police leadership commission launched

The College of Policing, with Home Office support, has launched a new Police Leadership Commission to conduct a six-month review into leadership across all levels of policing. Chaired by Lord Blunkett and Lord Herbert of South Downs, the commission will assess current capabilities, identify gaps, and make recommendations to strengthen leadership in response to evolving threats such as digital crime, violence against women and girls, and declining public confidence. The initiative aligns with the government's Plan for Change, which includes goals to recruit 13,000 additional officers and halve knife crime within a decade.

The commission will examine entry routes, training programmes, investment in leadership development, and the balance between national and local initiatives. It will engage experts from policing, the military, private sector, and academia to shape a culture of continuous learning and development. Reporting in May 2026, the commission aims to deliver a blueprint for trusted, effective police leadership that meets future demands and restores public confidence.

New professional development review guidance launched

New guidance for professional development reviews (PDRs) has been launched by the College of Policing, shifting from annual appraisals to a year-round, supportive approach focused on wellbeing, career growth, and performance. The guidance encourages regular, two-way conversations between managers and staff, tailored to shift patterns and flexible schedules. Key elements include goal setting, recognition of achievements, and continuous learning, with senior leaders expected to model the approach and line managers supported to lead meaningful discussions.

This refreshed model supports the National Talent Development Strategy by embedding continuous development and recognising potential across all roles. It aims to improve staff retention, motivation, and job satisfaction, ultimately enhancing public service delivery and community safety. The guidance positions PDRs as a strategic tool to nurture talent, strengthen leadership, and build a more capable and resilient policing workforce.



Knife crime named the leading policing issue for young people

A national survey commissioned by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) Youth Panel highlights growing concerns among young people about policing and public safety. Key figures included:

- 26% of respondents cited knife crime as their top concern.
- 20% identified drug dealing as a priority issue.
- 59% expressed confidence in local policing, down from 66% last year.
- 70% said they would report a crime to the police.

The Youth Panel's 2030 Manifesto for Change calls for reforms including a community-led complaints system, mandatory body-worn video use, and enhanced officer training in trauma-informed practices, neurodiversity, and mental health. The IOPC has committed to supporting these youth-led initiatives to improve trust and accountability.

Annual report on deaths during or following police contact in 2024/25

The annual report on deaths during or following police contact in 2024/25 has been published by the IOPC. The report records 17 deaths in or following police custody, down from 25 the previous year and slightly below the 10-year average of 18. There were two fatal police shootings, 26 deaths from 25 police-related road traffic incidents, and 60 apparent suicides following custody, eight fewer than in 2023/24. The IOPC also investigated 50 other deaths following police contact, a decrease of 12 year-on-year.

Key figures:

- Nine of the 17 custody deaths involved individuals with known mental health concerns and 15 had links to drugs or alcohol.
- Five custody deaths involved police use of force, and seven of the 50 other deaths involved restraint or force.
- 63% of suicides involved individuals arrested for alleged sexual offences, with 45% related to offences against children.
- 18 of 26 road traffic deaths were pursuit-related, with the average age of the deceased being 25 years.
- 44 deaths followed police contact after welfare concerns were raised and 13 of 16 domestic-related deaths involved female victims.

IOPC strengthens investigations units

The IOPC is undertaking a major transformation project to strengthen its investigative capacity and improve the quality and timeliness of police complaint investigations. A total of 40 new trainee investigators will join in two waves, October 2025 and early 2026, bringing the number of new recruits over the past 18 months to nearly 100, all trained to the national Professionalising Investigations Programme (PIP1) standard. An additional 36 investigators have joined via the Direct Entry programme, and 450 applications were received for just 11 senior Decision Maker roles, reflecting strong interest in the organisation.

The IOPC is shifting from a regional to a national operating model to better align resources with national priorities, while retaining regional hubs for local knowledge. A new team of Complex Decision Makers will focus exclusively on high-profile cases, and an Operational Policy Group will oversee decision-making standards and consistency. With 1,300 applications received in one week for the new investigator scheme, the IOPC aims to become a more agile, diverse, and productive organisation, enhancing public trust in the police complaints system.

Evaluation of three police interventions to tackle violence against women and girls

The College of Policing has published evaluations on three police interventions to reduce violence against women and girls (VAWG), funded by the Cabinet Office Evaluation Accelerator Fund. The studies assessed forensic marking, police-led classroom education, and video responses to domestic abuse, offering evidence-based insights into prevention and victim support.

Key findings:

- 22% reduction in repeat domestic abuse incidents through forensic marking.
- £83 economic benefit for every £1 spent on forensic marking.
- Pupils taught by police officers showed greater understanding of sexual consent and were more likely to report concerns.
- Video responses enabled faster victim engagement and improved risk assessments, with most victims preferring video or in-person follow-up.



Fire

National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) urges overhaul of building safety system

The NFCC has issued a warning that systemic flaws in the UK's building safety regime are obstructing remediation efforts. In its newly launched Remediation Position Statement, the NFCC calls for a centrally coordinated programme to address compliance, funding, accountability, and workforce shortages. It argues that relying on fire and rescue services to enforce a broken system is unsustainable and risks leaving critical safety gaps unaddressed.

While NFCC supports the government's Remediation Acceleration Plan, with targets to remediate all high-rise buildings by 2029 and medium-rise buildings by 2031, progress is hampered by fragmented funding, data inconsistencies, and workforce constraints.

The NFCC has estimated that it would cost fire and rescue services between £29.86m and £61.77m to inspect all buildings that require remedial works, coming at a time when services are facing real-terms budget cuts. The NFCC reported that there are less than 30 fully competent fire engineers in English fire and rescue services, roles which take years to train, and staff had left to join the private sector.



Questions for committee's consideration

- What arrangements are being put in place within your Fire service to address the skills shortage in this area?



Wildfire incidents in 2025 sets new record

Fire and rescue services in England and Wales have responded to 996 wildfires so far in 2025 (as of 4 September), surpassing the previous record of 994 incidents in 2022. This increase follows a dry spring and multiple summer heatwaves, placing significant strain on resources. The NFCC warned that these blazes can last for days or weeks and put a strain on fire and rescue services.

In August 2025, major incidents were declared in Dorset, Wiltshire, North Yorkshire, and Edinburgh, requiring reinforcements from across the UK. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has called for urgent and sustained investment in personnel, equipment, and infrastructure to meet rising demand.

NFCC Chair Phil Garrigan warned that fire and rescue services are meeting these challenges at a time of reduced numbers of firefighters (11,000 less than a decade ago) and a 20% increase in the number of incidents responded to. He stated that fire and rescue services are “the foundation of national resilience” and must not become the “forgotten emergency service” in regard to investment amid climate-driven challenges such as wildfires and floods.

Fire prevention and protection statistics

Annual statistics on fire prevention and protection activities undertaken by Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) in England, for the year ending March 2025, has been released by the MHCLG. The data provides critical insights into operational trends, compliance levels, and resource allocation. Key statistics include:

- Home fire safety visits (HFSVS): A total of 588,855 HFSVs were completed, up 2.9% from the previous year. 85% were targeted at vulnerable households, the highest proportion since records began.
- Fire safety audits: FRSs conducted 51,020 audits, a 2.4% increase year-on-year. Only 58% were deemed satisfactory, indicating a strategic focus on higher-risk premises. Shops, care homes, and sleeping accommodations accounted for 43% of all audits.
- Enforcement activity: 2,972 formal notifications were issued (up 5.3%), including 1,728 enforcement notices. Breaches of Article 14 (Emergency exits) remained the most common, though down 12% from the previous year.
- Other fire safety work: FRSs completed 47,665 building regulation consultations (up 4.8%) and 119,610 non-statutory fire safety activities (up 13%), with shops being the most frequent premises type across all categories.



Questions for committee's consideration

- Are the Audit Committee briefed on how the service is adapting to the record number of wildfire incidents and increasing operational demand?

Fire and rescue incidents for the year ending June 2025

The fire and rescue incident statistics have been updated for the year ending June 2025. Key figures include:

- FRSs attended 628,764 incidents, a 5.7% rise from the previous year. This includes 165,697 fires (up 28%), 250,341 false alarms (down 2.1%), and 212,726 non-fire incidents (up 1.6%).
- There were 279 fire-related fatalities (up 21%) and 6,650 non-fatal casualties (up 6.1%), with 208 fatalities occurring in dwellings. No fatalities were reported in high-rise flats.
- Primary fires rose by 7.0% to 65,116, while secondary fires surged by 48% to 98,687. Outdoor primary fires saw a 52% increase, largely due to seasonal factors.
- Collaborating incidents (eg assisting other agencies) reached a record 73,962, up 5.6%. Medical incidents dropped by 16%, while road traffic collisions rose slightly by 1.3%.
- Average response time to primary fires was 9 minutes 14 seconds, up 12 seconds from the previous year. Secondary fire response times increased to 9 minutes 38 seconds, reflecting higher incident volumes.

Analysis of non-fire incidents attended by fire and rescue services

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has published its annual analysis of non-fire incidents attended by FRSs in England for the year ending March 2025. The data highlights significant operational trends and emerging pressures across the sector.

- Record high in non-fire incidents: FRSs attended 211,222 non-fire incidents, marking the highest volume since records began. This represents a 1.8% increase year-on-year, 23% rise over five years, and a 69% increase compared to a decade ago.
- Sharp rise in fatalities: There were 5,242 fatalities in non-fire incidents, up 17% from the previous year and more than double the figure from five years ago. The fatality rate rose to 26.0 per 1,000 incidents, up from 22.7 the previous year.
- Collaborating incidents surge: Incidents involving collaboration with other agencies (eg entry/exit, suicide attempts, and assistance) rose to 73,332, a 247% increase over ten years. These now account for 35% of all non-fire incidents, up from 17% a decade ago.
- Road traffic collisions (RTCs): FRSs attended 32,078 RTCs, the highest on record, with peak attendance during evening rush hours. Fatalities in RTCs declined to 18.3 per 1,000 incidents, the lowest rate recorded.
- Medical incident decline: Medical-related incidents fell by 11% to 13,606, continuing a downward trend since the end of co-responding trials. However, the fatality rate in medical incidents rose sharply to 47.6 per 1,000, up from 36.2 the previous year.
- Flooding and water rescues: These incidents decreased by 8.3% to 18,540, though they remain 40% higher than a decade ago. Water rescues alone dropped by 19%, despite a long-term upward trend.
- False alarms and hazardous materials: Non-fire false alarms increased by 1.9% to 9,991, while hazardous materials incidents rose by 3.9% to a record 4,310.

Detailed analysis of fires attended by fire and rescue services in England

The MHCLG has released detailed statistics on fire incidents and response times across England for the year ended March 2025. The data highlights operational pressures, risk patterns, and performance metrics relevant to fire and rescue services. Some key statistics from the document include:

- FRSs attended 142,494 fires, a 2.5% increase on the previous year. Outdoor fires rose by 5.3%, while primary fires declined slightly by 0.5%.
- There were 271 fire-related fatalities, up 8.0% year-on-year, with 77% occurring in dwellings. Non-fatal casualties totalled 6,410, with 73% linked to dwelling fires.
- 24% of dwelling fires occurred in homes without a smoke alarm, accounting for 31% of dwelling fire fatalities. Alarms functioned correctly in only 48% of dwelling fires.
- The average response time to primary fires was 9 minutes 6 seconds, up 3 seconds from the previous year. Drive time accounted for 68% of total response time.
- FRSs rescued 2,958 people from fires (up 3.9%) and responded to 4,112 incidents involving evacuations (down 1.3%).



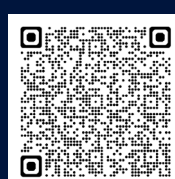
Questions for committee's consideration

- What assurance do you have that fire services are adequately resourced and trained to respond to the rising number of non-fire incidents and fatalities?

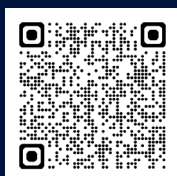
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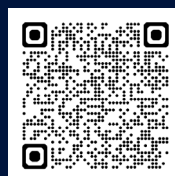
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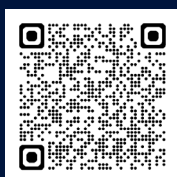
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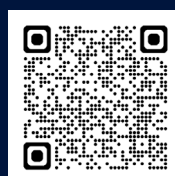
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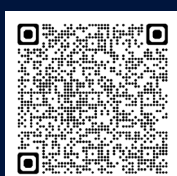
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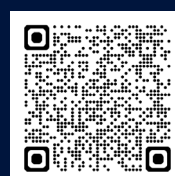
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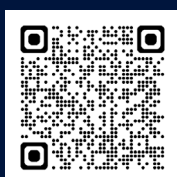
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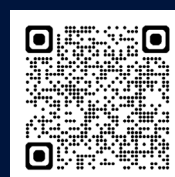
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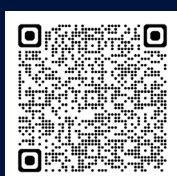
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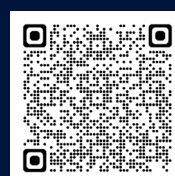
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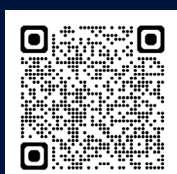
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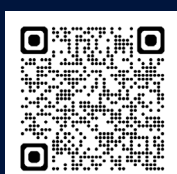
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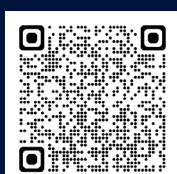
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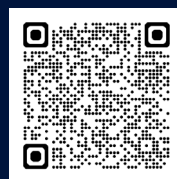
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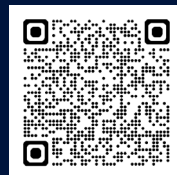
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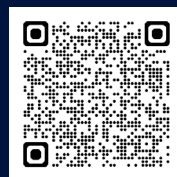
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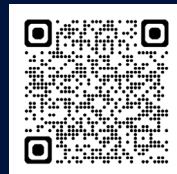
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