



Gloucestershire  
**Fire and Rescue Service**

Working together for a safer Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service

# **Productivity and Efficiency Plan 2025-2026**



Gloucestershire  
COUNTY COUNCIL

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# 1: Introduction

The National Framework sets a requirement that Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) produce and publish annual efficiency plans. There is a specific ask from the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire that in 2025/26, FRAs produce plans that cover their efficiencies and productivity initiatives in 2024/25, and their intentions for continuing efficiencies and productivity into 2025/26 onwards.

As part of the 2021/22 Spending Review, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Local Government Association (LGA) proposed that Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) in England could deliver 2% of non-pay efficiencies and increase productivity of wholetime firefighters by 3% for each year of the Spending Review period. The 2025/26 Productivity and Efficiency Plans will help the NFCC, LGA and Home Office to collate evidence and to assess likely progress at a national level against the agreed Spending Review goals.

It is a requirement that the Productivity and Efficiency plans are signed off by the relevant Section 151 Officer. Plans are sent to the Home Office and published on FRA websites, in a format that is easy for the public to access.

## 2: Financial Information

### Budget

The 2025/26 Revenue Budget was approved by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) on 19 February 2025. As a County Council Fire and Rescue Service, Gloucestershire does not directly receive income from precepting or from the Local Government Finance Settlement albeit the sum provided by the Council includes these sources of funding.

Budget (£000)			
Revenue Expenditure	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Direct Employee	18,161	20,055	21,461
Indirect Employee	1,272	1,012	561
Premises	4,436	4,748	4,845
Transport	66	68	78
Supplies & Services	2,380	2,366	2,608
Capital Financing		0	0
Other	60	-854	-694
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,375</b>	<b>27,395</b>	<b>28,859</b>
Revenue Income			
Gloucestershire County Council Funded	-20,667	-23,056	-24,725
Other Grants	-5,553	-4,233	-4,025
Income Raised Locally	-155	-106	-109
<b>Total</b>	<b>-26,375</b>	<b>-27,395</b>	<b>-28,859</b>

### Reserves

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) does not hold reserves. Under the Local Government Act 2003, GCC has a responsibility to ensure that reserves are adequate. As at 31 March 2025, the following were held on behalf of the Service:

Reserves (£000)					
	Year end balance 2023/24	Year end balance 2024/25	Year end balance 2025/26	Year end balance 2026/27	Year end balance 2027/28
PFI Equalisation Fund	3,827	3,480	2,852	2,165	1,416
Grants Unapplied from Previous Years	353	206	0	0	0
Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme	592	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,772</b>	<b>3,686</b>	<b>2,852</b>	<b>2,165</b>	<b>1,416</b>

## Planned Use of Earmarked Reserves

### Public Finance Initiative Equalisation Fund

The equalisation fund reserve smooths out the revenue implications over the course of the PFI contract. PFI credits are received within the early years of the contract and need to be held to fund anticipated costs in the later years. Reserve balances peaked in 2022/2023 at £4.1 million but then reduce over the next 13 years. Options are being explored to rectify the projected shortfall forecast at the end of the contract in March 2037.

### Grants Unapplied from Previous Years

The balance of £206,000 relates to historical grants received (e.g. new dimensions and protection uplift grants) and is expected to be fully utilised during 2025/26.

### 3: Efficiencies

Efficiency Data (£000)						
	Actual 2023/24		Actual 2024/25		Forecast 2025/26	
Opening Net Revenue Budget	20,667		23,056		24,725	
Less Total Direct Employee Costs	18,161		20,055		21,461	
Non-Pay Budget	2,506		3,001		3,264	
Efficiency Target (2% of Non-Pay Budget)	50		60		65	
Efficiency Savings	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent
<b>Direct Employee</b>						
Reduction in Prevention/Protection /Response Staff			56			
Reduction in support Staff						
<b>Indirect Employee (e.g. training, travel etc.)</b>						
All Indirect Employee Costs		112			14	84
<b>Premises</b>						
<b>Transport</b>						
<b>Supplies and Services</b>						
National Procurement Savings						
Local Procurement Savings					37	
Other Technology Improvements						
Decreased Usage					5	
<b>Capital Financing</b>						
<b>Other</b>						
Resilience Cover Change		92				
Extending Life of IT Equipment	23		29			
<b>Total Efficiency Savings</b>	227		85		140	
<b>Efficiency Savings as a Percentage of Non-Payroll Budgets</b>	9.06%		2.83%		4.29%	
<b>Efficiency Savings Target</b>	2.00%		2.00%		2.00%	
<b>Over-Under</b>	7.06%		0.83%		2.29%	

It should be noted that premises expenditure does not form part of the GFRS net budget other than that making up the PFI Station contract. Transport and capital financing are also not part of the net budget as they are provided as a service by other departments within GCC .

## Efficiencies Achieved 2024/25

### Direct Employee – total saving £56,000

GFRS were able to streamline areas of work in Recruitment and Promotions which enabled a reduction in the establishment of a Crew Manager position saving £56,000. The streamlining was achieved through an increased use of staff across the wider organisation to support advertising recruitment campaigns as well as assisting at assessment and evaluation events and trialling Artificial Intelligence (AI) at the application sifting stage.

### Other – total saving £29,000

#### *Station PCs*

Refurbishment of 40 station PCs rather than replacing with new equipment created a saving of £21,000.

Additional benefits included:

- quicker machine response.
- the hard drive capacity has increased four-fold, and this has removed storage problems and support calls related to storage issues.
- the new hard drives were imaged from the old drives, so the new drive holds all the files and user profiles from the original disk. There was no disruption to staff through the loss of files, or logins needing to be recreated.
- it is a sustainable use of computer hardware.

#### *Servers*

The benefits of improved speed and sustainability have been realised through upgrading and extending the lifespan of 4 servers through refurbishment rather than replacing with new equipment, saving £8,000.

## Future Efficiencies

### Use of Apprenticeship Levy

Adopting an apprenticeship model for training wholetime firefighters enables the use of the apprenticeship levy funding. We anticipate 6 student apprenticeships over the coming year creating savings of £84,000.

### Training Related Efficiencies

It is GFRS policy to rotate instructors at our current training facility every three years; the instructors require a number of advanced courses to assist them in their delivery of training. The contract with the training centre will terminate in April 2028 so the decision has been taken not to rotate the instructors again. This will result in a recurrent saving of £7,000 for 2025/26 and 2026/27.

Incident Command training is currently carried out at a single location, with all 120 trained commanders within the on-call cadre being required to attend once every two-years. The revalidation takes half a day to complete including travelling time. A change in the model, with the training team visiting stations on a designated training night and using a mobile training package to revalidate all commanders, will generate savings of £7,000 per annum.

## **Supplies and Services**

The Logistics and Resources department within GFRS are committed to delivering high-performance logistics and resource management through a framework-led, compliant, and value-driven approach. Our operations are aligned with the latest public sector standards, including full implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.

Through utilising the latest Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework RM6261 for the provision of Mobile Voice and Data Services: Lot 1 Mobile Voice & Data Services Catalogue pricing, when our contract ends and by reviewing usage requirements, we anticipate saving £37,000 this financial year.

A further £5,000 saving is expected through using the CCS framework RM6116 Network Services 3 Service catalogue to review usage and replace inter site connectivity services at a lower cost.

When undertaking tender opportunities, the route to market is reviewed to include the use of frameworks such as Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO), NFCC, Blue Light Commercial and the CCS to maximise savings through economies of scale and enhancing collaborative working across the fire sector.

## **Collaboration**

### **Shared premises**

GFRS share their premises with other Blue-light partners. Gloucestershire Police utilise a number of On-call stations as drop-in centres. It enables members of the public to visit the station to meet and discuss issues with their local Policing teams. This has proved beneficial to those rural locations and has given communities an increased sense of safety. It also fosters better working relationships between Fire Crews and local Policing teams.

GFRS also share their premises with South West Ambulance Service (SWAST) who are based out of a wholetime station and have access to others. This fosters good working relationships as crews are often mixing in an operational setting.

### **Co-responding and Partnerships**

GFRS have been working in accordance with a Co-responding memorandum of understanding since 2006. We currently operate a single response and dual response model in 11 stations. The communities these stations serve benefit from this model as many rural locations attract long travel times for SWAST. The lifesaving opportunities our Co-responders provide, is a positive outcome for these communities. With the additional activity of Co-responding, our staff get more incident call-outs which supports retention. All payroll activity is recharged to SWAST with minimal cost implications for GFRS\*.

*\* SWAST is currently reviewing the Co-responding service*



Concern for Safety is a patient focussed initiative. Instead of Police resources being used to gain access to a private address where SWAST have concerns for a resident and cannot gain access, GFRS will attend to support and enable access. The positive impact often sees a quicker entry made to the property as GFRS have more effective equipment. It also frees up limited Police resources and reduces damage and therefore cost, to the homeowner.

In Gloucestershire, GFRS are firmly embedded as part of the Local Resilience Forum. We share office space to enable good working relationships and have a designated Officer as the liaison with them. We participate in all areas of training including table-tops and larger national events.

The GFRS and the South West Ambulance Service collaboration, formalised in a memorandum of understanding, is designed to enhance the responsiveness and effectiveness of emergency services in addressing critical incidents. This partnership focuses on providing timely and coordinated assistance across a range of emergency situations.

From April 2023 to March 2025, the following details capture the scope of incidents attended:

- Total number of incidents: 1,164
- Instances where GFRS assisted ambulance services: 442
- Cases involving bariatric patients requiring specialised equipment and support: 128
- Situations where medical assistance was provided to individuals in need: 72
- Reports concerning individual safety, which included welfare checks and assessments: 64

Through this collaborative initiative, both services have significantly improved their response capabilities, resulting in quicker interventions and effective resource utilisation. The advantages of this partnership extend to the communities served, as it fosters greater safety and well-being through enhanced emergency service collaboration.

Firefighters from Stroud Station have been working with Stroud District Council's (SDC) Independent Living Hubs to effectively target Safe & Well visits. Independent Living Hubs are a group of self-contained homes specifically designed for older people with vulnerabilities. Working with SDC, visits are pre-planned with residents with advanced letter drops and notices highlighting timeframes. Any concerns found are fed back to SDC who then work with the residents to seek solutions. Feedback has stated that this is a valuable way to engage with residents and has really made a difference.

## Assessment of Efficiencies

Against the "efficiency savings as a percentage of non-payroll budgets" target of 2%, GFRS achieved 2.83% in 2024/25 and is forecast to exceed this in 2025/26.

## Income

Income (£000)						
	Actual 2023/24		Actual 2024/25		Forecast 2025/26	
	Recurrent	Non-Recurrent	Recurrent	Non-Recurrent	Recurrent	Non-Recurrent
Income Generated from Charging Policies		-101		-84		-88
Income Generated from Trading Operations		-41		-84		-11
Income Generated from Shared Premises	-9		-9		-10	
Income Generated from Interest on Investments – N/A Not part of GFRS Budget						
Income Generated from Other Sources						
<b>Total</b>	-151		-177		-109	

### Income from Charging Policies

This includes charges for non-emergency special services, fire reports and abortive hydrant charges. Charges are increased in line with inflation each year.

### Income from Trading Operations

This includes donations and attendance charges for the SkillZONE educational centre.

### Income from shared Premises

The Services shares a number of fire stations with the South West Ambulance Trust.

## 4: Productivity

### Asset Management and IT Investment

#### People Plan Dashboard

GFRS designed, developed and established the People Plan Dashboard aligned to the 6 areas of the strategic People Plan. This provides:

- one place to go to for a range of people-orientated data and information, reducing duplication and divergence of this information and data.
- enhanced understanding and ownership of the source data.
- improved opportunity for enhanced overview and scrutiny of 'performance' across this range of data.
- improved accuracy of data by enabling better quality checking and subsequent improvements to collection and handling processes (appraisal data, for example).
- reduced manual handling of data and manual production of reports (for example appraisal data) saving officer time in days per month.
- improved accessibility to core data provided in a more easily digestible visual style.

#### Improvement and Transformation Monitoring

We designed and delivered a new approach to recording, updating, and reporting on Service-wide improvements initially driven by a need for effective and efficient management and monitoring of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) recommendations. This involved creation of a central Microsoft List and associated Power BI report with various pages. This provides:

- one place to go to for a range of service improvement activities and associated information including status, progress, links to wider strategic framework, owner, team, etc.
- reduced duplication of vital core information and potential for misunderstanding, and duplication of effort.
- enhanced understanding and ownership of the improvement actions.
- removed need for manual production of some reports saving officer time in days per month.
- improved opportunity for enhanced overview and scrutiny of 'performance' across this range, using one source.
- reduced number of team plans and increased consistency, quality and accessibility to their contents, linking them to wider strategic delivery framework.

## Station Dashboards

Working with Station Managers we designed, developed, and established the Station Managers' Dashboard containing operational incident and prevention activity, availability and response times, training and people data. This provides:-

- one place to go to for a range of station and watch-specific data and information, to support better management and productivity
- key information for managing station staff and service delivery activities
- improved consistency and increasing accuracy and relevance of data

These dashboards are updated weekly to reflect changing needs of stations and in light of quality checking and refinements suggested by the central team.

## Integration of Command and Availability Systems

The Service has recently updated how our Firefighter availability system engages with the mobilising system. Any resource changes made in one system are automatically transferred to the other, and the availability of operational assets are adjusted in real time without the need for operator intervention.

The main productivity outcome is that Fire Control Operators no longer have to manually change Fire Appliance availability. This is necessary every time On-call staffing levels affect the status of a Fire Station. Every 15 minutes the availability system would update the Control Room display, and any change would have to be manually transcribed into the mobilising system. Changes may affect one appliance or several and are greater during busier times such as the start and end of the working day. If each change averages a minute, and 60 changes could occur in a normal day, then officer capacity of one hour per day is released.

The most important outcome is that human error is removed. Fire Control staff historically had to manually transfer changes during busy periods and incidents. If a change in Fire Appliance staffing has been missed due to other demands, Fire Control could mobilise a Fire Appliance that does not have enough staff to attend. Conversely, they could also fail to mobilise a Fire Appliance that has become available as staff returned to duty, but their improved status has gone unnoticed. The new interface has removed the possibility of this happening making the service response more effective and productive.

## Use of AI for Recruitment

The recruitment team used a bespoke designed AI enabled platform called ALICE (Automated Language Inference and Candidate Evaluation). It analysed and provided a score and rationale for answers given to the application questions for assessors to review and then progress applications. It was a tool designed to greatly reduce the staff and time required to sift through the hundreds of applications GFRS receives when conducting a wholetime firefighter recruitment campaign. The system was the first use of AI in a fire and rescue service in the UK in this manner.

Having ascertained that there wasn't anything already available, the Service worked with external providers to create a system. This included testing, legal compliance with regards to GDPR and data protection, best practice adherence from the NFCC and the Information Governance Office and collaboration with GCC to make sure all requirements were met.

The system was successfully implemented for the 2024/25 wholetime recruitment campaign in Q4 of 2024 and demonstrated a saving of 36 staff days when compared with the 2021 wholetime recruitment process.

The new approach allowed for other areas of the process to be extended allowing for greater scrutiny and assessment of candidates ensuring we got the best people for the service. The initiative also reduces the human element that could have influence on progression due to bias, creating a fairer more robust process that reduces the risk of challenge to GFRS recruitment practices and therefore reputational damage to the organisation.

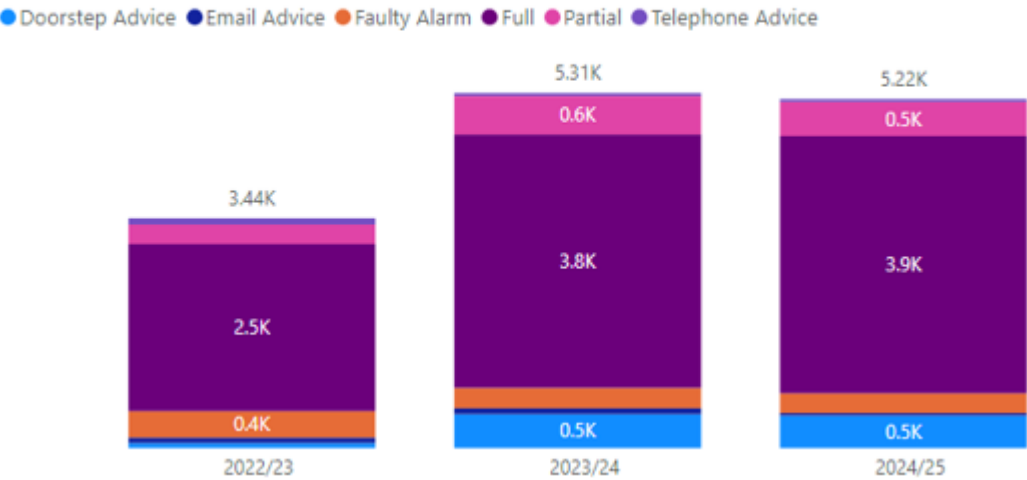
## Outcome-based Activities

For the upcoming 2025/26 period, we have outlined specific targets for prevention and protection initiatives, which aim to enhance our effectiveness and prevent potential emergencies arising. Details of these targets include measurable goals that will guide our efforts in improving operational efficiency, reducing response times, and increasing overall participant engagement in safety programmes:

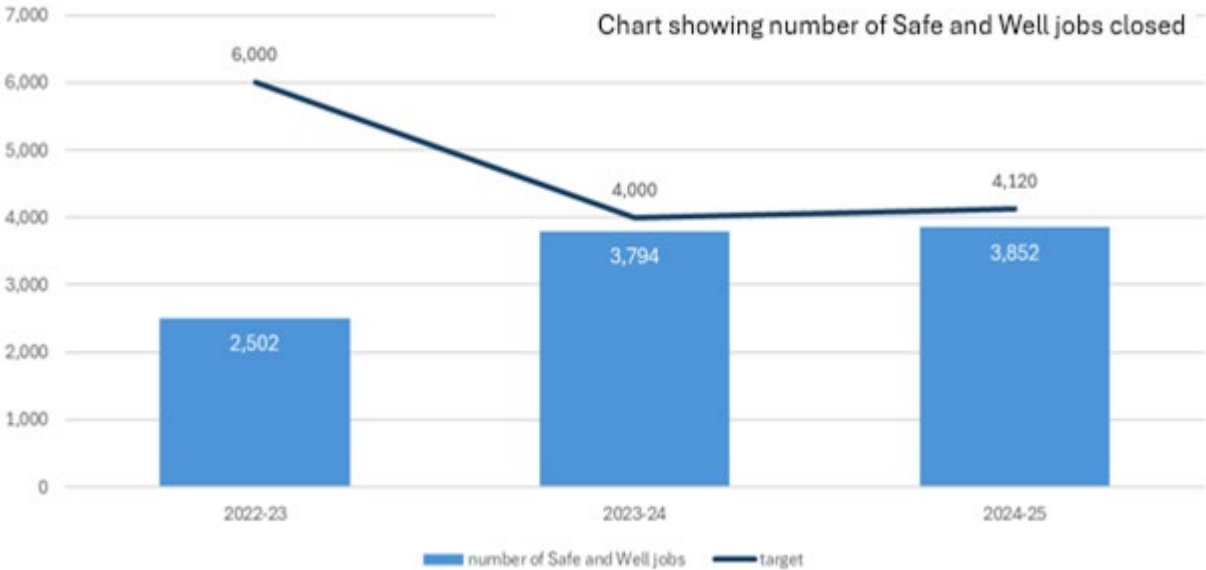
- Safe & Well visits and home fire safety visits; 4244 per annum.
- Site familiarisation: 440 visits per annum.
- Business fire safety visits: 1200 per annum.
- Hydrant routes: 240 per annum.
- Crew/individual competence is set to a minimum of 70% and a target of 90% to be achieved quarterly.

For the Spending Review period 2022/23-2024/25, the following graphs detail prevention related activities:

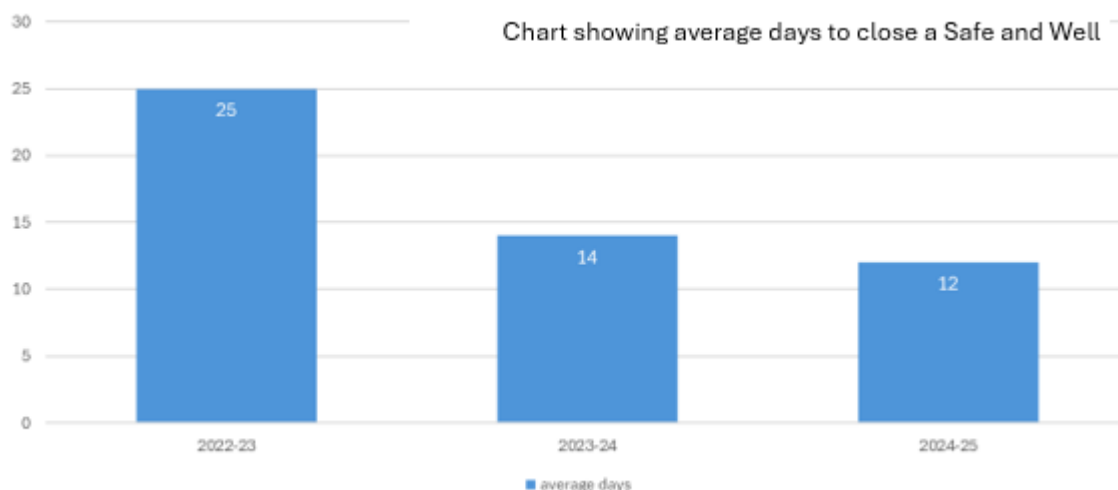
Chart showing jobs closed by type, where 'Full' is a Safe and Well job



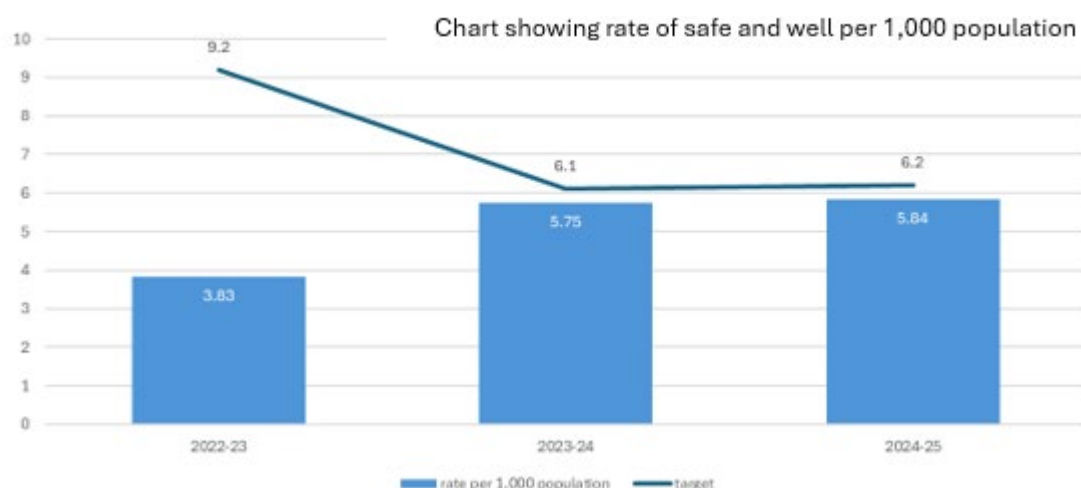
We increased the rate of Safe & Well visits per 1000 population. Although overall activity was slightly down in 2024/25, the quality of Safe & Well visits across all staff improved, so more activity met the threshold for full Safe & Well.



The number of Safe & Well jobs closed was significantly below target in 2022/23 but improved in 2023/24 and again in 2024/25 from 2.5K to 3.8K and to 3.9 K in 2024/25, including an increase in high and very high risk cases, taking more time to complete and requiring a higher level of expertise across the workforce.



We have worked hard to improve the timeliness of contact from first referral to closing Safe & Well visits from an average of 25 days in 2022/23 to 12 days in 2024/25



We have made significant progress since 2022/23 to increase the rate of Safe & Well visits per 1000 population. The rate improved from 3.83 in 2022/23 to 5.75 in 2023/24 and 5.84 in 2024/25. This is against the backdrop of more challenging visits, taking longer to complete and with a much clearer focus on identifying and mitigating risk.

Business safety visits, site-specific risk information, and familiarisation visits are recorded within the Community Fire Risk Management Information System (CFRMIS). Competency performance is thoroughly monitored and assessed through our PDRpro system.

Data is analysed and used to monitor and review our service key performance indicators and evaluate our performance within our family group. This ensures we have a good understanding of areas which are underachieving, where we may need to reassess our approach to increase efficiency and effectiveness and those which are performing well.

We conduct a thorough evaluation of the outcomes and quality of our Safe & Well visits, focusing on the needs of the most vulnerable individuals in our communities. To achieve this, we utilise a comprehensive risk register that helps us identify those who may be at greater risk. Our dedicated prevention team actively monitors and reviews the efficacy and quality of these visits, ensuring that our approach is effective and that we are continually improving our services to meet the needs of our community members.

## Workforce Capacity

The service conducted a comprehensive response review for the period of 2024/25, which provided valuable insights into enhancing our operational effectiveness in serving the community. This review enabled us to gain a clear understanding of our capacity during working hours and revealed a significant number of hours that could be allocated to further outcome-based activities. By proposing modifications to our start and finish times, we aim to implement longer working days that will improve our productivity and, consequently, ensure the safety of both the community and firefighters.

The service has also identified additional capacity within our current working day model and has implemented plans to optimise this resource. The new approach is designed to support wholetime crews by providing clear guidelines for activities during both day and night shifts. During daytime hours, the focus will be on outcome-based activities such as safety checks, fire safety initiatives, and community engagement. Nighttime activities will be limited to essential tasks, including fitness training, role-specific competency maintenance, administrative duties, routine stationery activities, and the maintenance and testing of equipment.

The new start and finish times, along with the working day guidelines, will enhance productivity in our prevention and protection activities. This approach will optimise our working hours, facilitating Safe & Well visits as well as business fire safety inspections.

## Meeting the 3% Productivity Target

GFRS believes it is well placed to deliver the 3% productivity increase into the future.