

## **Analysis of Audit Commission National Report Rising to the Challenge: Improving Fire Service Efficiency**

### **Report of the Chief Fire Officer**

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### **1 Purpose of Report**

This report acts as a supplement to the previous paper brought before Members on 11 February 2009 in respect of the Audit Commission publication entitled 'Rising to the Challenge: Improving Fire Service Efficiency.' The previous report sought Member approval for officers to undertake further analysis of the Commission's report and the results of the analysis are set out herewith.

### **2 Recommendations**

The Fire Authority is recommended to note the contents of the report.

### **3 Background**

The Audit Commission has responsibility for the performance assessment and audit of the 46 fire and rescue services in England, and is the body charged with providing explicit assurance that they meet the requirements of the National Framework.

During 2008 the Audit Commission conducted a national study which combined findings from their work with the Fire and Rescue Service since 2004 with detailed analysis of operational, financial and incident data. From this research they published, in December 2008, their report entitled 'Rising to the Challenge: Improving Fire Service Efficiency.' The Commission's report assesses the current level of efficiency and performance in the Fire and Rescue Service and draws out lessons for the future.

The Commission states within the report that it is – “designed for FRA [Fire and Rescue Authority] members and CFOs [Chief Fire Officers] and it challenges them to consider those areas where they might improve efficiency and effectiveness further in light of a tight funding settlement in 2011 and current economic difficulties.”

The report is available on the Audit Commission website a link to which is provided at the end of this report.

## **4 Analysis and Findings**

The Commission’s report sets out 15 ‘questions for the fire service to ask’ (pages 8 and 9). Officers have undertaken analysis against the 15 questions and the responses, including areas for improvement, are set out at Appendix A.

The report contains a multitude of graphs and data, on which the Commission has based its conclusions. The data source is readily available to fire and rescue authorities/services, thus enabling further analysis to be undertaken. Utilising the data source, officers have undertaken detailed analysis to determine the relevant performance of this Fire Authority/Service in comparison with family group fire and rescue authorities/services, namely Cornwall, Gloucestershire, Isle of Wight, Northumberland, and Warwickshire. The results of this analysis are set out at Appendix B. Within the analysis are a number of recommendations, which officers will address to secure continuous improvement.

## **5 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

## **6 Legal Comment**

The Audit Commission Act 1998 places statutory responsibilities upon the Audit Commission to undertake assessments of local government bodies.

Local government bodies, including fire and rescue authorities, are required through the Local Government Act 1999 to participate in the assessments undertaken by the Audit Commission.

## **7 Equality Impact Assessment**

Officers have considered the Service’s Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have determined that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from the either this paper of the Commission’s report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

Notwithstanding the latter, whilst the Commission identifies generic issues relating to the Fire and Rescue Service, the Fire Authority may need to have further regard to equality and diversity issues, should it choose to pursue one or more of the recommendations set out within the supporting appendices.

## 8 Background Reports

### Appendix A

Rising to the Challenge: Analysis of 'Questions for the fire service to ask'

### Appendix B

Rising to the Challenge: Analysis of Data Source

## 9 Background Reports

### Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority

11 February 2009, Agenda Item 11 – Audit Commission National Report – Rising to the Challenge: Improving Fire Service Efficiency

## 10 Further Information

The Audit Commission's report may be accessed via its website at:

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/EC882132-ECDD-4cae-9027-D7FC4760FF01/RisingToTheChallenge17Dec08REP.pdf>

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk); the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity		Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment	*	Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial	*	Staff	
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*

# Rising to the challenge

## *Questions for fire services to ask*

Responses prepared on behalf of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

### Table of Contents

1.	HOW WELL ARE WE PERFORMING? .....	2
2.	WHAT HAS WORKED IN IMPROVING OUR PERFORMANCE? .....	3
3.	WHAT IMPACT HAS OUR CFS WORK HAD SO FAR? .....	4
4.	HOW ARE WE TARGETING OUR PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY WORK? .....	5
5.	WHERE HAVE WE MADE THE MAJORITY OF OUR SAVINGS SO FAR? .....	5
6.	HOW WILL WE MEET OUR SHARE OF THE £110 MILLION EFFICIENCY SAVINGS REQUIRED? .....	7
7.	CAN WE SAVE MONEY BY CHANGING CREWING OR SHIFT ARRANGEMENTS? .....	8
8.	DO WE MATCH COVER AND RESOURCES TO RISKS? .....	9
9.	HOW WELL DO WE ENGAGE WITH THE PUBLIC? .....	10
10.	CAN WE WORK BETTER WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS? .....	11
11.	WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE WE ENGAGED IN WITH LOCAL PARTNERS? .....	11
12.	HOW WILL WE INCREASE THE NUMBERS OF WOMEN AND PEOPLE FROM MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN OUR WORKFORCE? .....	13
13.	IS OUR FIRE SERVICE AN ORGANISATION WOMEN AND PEOPLE FROM MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES WANT TO WORK FOR? .....	14
14.	WHAT IS OUR LEVEL OF SICKNESS ABSENCE? .....	15
15.	WHAT IS OUR LEVEL OF ILL HEALTH RETIREMENTS? .....	16

**Note:**

The use of the expression 'Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service' (SFRS) within this appendix should also be interpreted as representative of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority.

## 1. How well are we performing?

- **How do we compare with similar fire services?**
- **Do we know why?**
- **How far have we reduced the risk to our communities?**

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) compares extremely well with other services and is arguably one of the top performing fire and rescue services (FRS) in England. The results of the Audit Commission's *Performance Assessment Framework*<sup>1</sup> for all 46 FRSs were formally published on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009. Analysis of the Commission's findings, when aggregated across the framework's four areas of assessment indicates that:

- SFRS's performance, compared nationally, is placed within the top five performing FRSs.
- Is only one of two FRSs (the other being Kent FRS) to achieve the maximum '*Direction of Travel*' score (*Improving Strongly*) for two consecutive years.
- Within the West Midlands region (which also includes: West Midlands FRS, Staffordshire FRS, Hereford & Worcester FRS (H&WFRS) and Warwickshire FRS), SFRS together with H&WFRS, are the top performing FRSs in the region.
- Within the 'family group' (which also includes: Cornwall, Gloucestershire, Isle of Wight, Northumberland, and Warwickshire) SFRS is the top performing FRS.

SFRS's continuing success is largely down to good leadership from Members (as noted<sup>2</sup> by the Commission) and a highly motivated and committed workforce (SFRS were identified within the FRS Cultural Audit<sup>3</sup> as having the second highest motivated workforce in Great Britain). The Commission, in their FRS National Report 2008, stated that "*The more successful services, such as Merseyside FRS and Shropshire FRS, have built a performance culture throughout their organisations.*" (Paragraph: 46). The collective approach by Members and staff to *performance* has led to the improvements experienced by local communities.

Risk reduction within the community is achieved through a variety of partnerships and initiatives – most notably the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

The results of these and other initiatives, over a 10 year period, have resulted in:

- 60% reduction in deaths through primary fires
- 56% reduction in injuries through primary fires
- 45% reduction in injuries in dwelling fires
- 88% reduction in injuries in road vehicle fires
- 27% reduction in accidental dwelling fires
- 21% reduction primary fires
- 46% reduction in chimney fires
- 21% reduction in false alarms
- 12% reduction in deliberate fires
- 23% reduction in dwelling fires

The Commission in their 2008/09 'Direction of Travel' assessment of SFRS commented that the Service is: "*Improving strongly. Performance is improving faster than others in the numbers of accidental dwelling fires, and injuries. Hoax calls and false alarms have dropped sharply.*"

The only area where performance has not resulted in improvement over a ten year period relates to the number of secondary fires, – with a recorded increase of 38%. It is recognised however that this may be due to irregularities in reporting (requiring further investigation).

### **Areas for further improvement?**

Further analysis to be undertaken to determine why SFRS's performance is a variance with other FRSs' performance in respect of secondary fires.

## 2. What has worked in improving our performance?

- **What can we learn from what others have done?**

As noted by the Commission in their FRS National Report 2008, SFRS has, for several years, instilled within the organisation a performance management culture. This has led to a joined-up approach to tackling and reducing the impact of fire and other risks upon the community. The Service's approach to risk reduction is driven through the Member led IRMP process, a process that has driven significant improvements in service delivery.

Arguably one of the most successful initiatives delivered through the IRMP has been the introduction of Retained Support Officers (RSOs), an initiative that has led to more efficient deployment of resources, resulting in the improved availability of retained fire engines throughout the county. The creation of RSOs has also had significant benefits in the delivery of targeted community safety campaigns, recruitment and training.

The Service is proactive in seeking best practice and innovation from others. The Service is leading partner within the West Midlands Regional Management Board (WMRMB) and actively seeks out new ways of working from others. This is not just restricted to the learning from UK FRSs. Since 2006 the Service has secured over 80 staff placements to FRSs operating in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, and Spain. The placements, secured through the EC's Lifelong Learning Programme (Leonardo) have offered unparalleled learning opportunities.

The Service is represented on several national and international committees/forums and has recently instigated a Family Benchmarking Group Performance Forum to seek out areas of best practice.

Performance of the Service, when assessed against the Audit Commission's ten Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for both 2007/08 and 2008/09 (as shown in Table 1 below) for two consecutive years, SFRS has achieved the Commission's highest '*Service Assessment*' score of '4.'

Table 1: Summary Results of Key Performance Indicators<sup>4</sup>

	2007/08	2008/09
6 KPIs In Upper Threshold	60%	60%
4 KPIs In Mid Table	40%	40%
0 KPIs Below The Lower Threshold	0%	0%
<b>Service Assessment rating:</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>

### **Areas for further improvement?**

An area identified for further improvement concerns the recruitment and employment of females into the Service. SFRS has secured level 4 of the Local Government Equality Standard in its drive to create and foster an organisational culture of equality and diversity, but the Service recognises that there is still a need to learn from others. The Service will liaise with family group FRSs to seek out innovative recruitment practices, particularly those targeted at females.

### 3. What impact has our CFS work had so far?

- **Should we devote more resources to this work?**

SFRS has sought to increase its investment in Community Fire Safety (CFS) work, evidenced by a 61% increase in non-firefighter positions in the Service over an eight year period (2000-2008). This has led to the introduction of specialist roles (in addition to inspecting officers, many of which are non-operational posts) within the Service enabling more targeted risk-based CFS work to be undertaken. Examples of such roles are:

- Building Regulations Officer
- Fire Crime Officer
- Unwanted Fire Signal Officer
- Youth Officer
- Vulnerable Persons Officer
- Road Safety Coordinator

The Service's CFS Department has introduced the following notable campaigns/initiatives that have had both a qualitative and quantitative impact upon local communities:

- Home Fire Safety Visits (£60k per annum is invested in smoke alarms)
- Project Safe Place – deployment of five Risk Reduction Officers
- Youth Quiz
- Crucial Crew
- Adopt a School
- Fire Setters Programme
- Project Pathfinder
- Outreach Strategy (including Outreach community vehicle)
- Project Ceasefire
- Fire Kills Campaigns

However, CFS is not only the responsibility of 'specialist' roles, and as such station based personnel (both wholetime and retained duty) have undertaken Home Fire Safety Checks within 33% of dwellings within Shropshire. SFRS is the second best performing FRS in England in this area, and the best performing within the family group of FRSSs.

The impact of CFS work upon the community in quantitative terms, over a 10 year period, has resulted in:

- 60% reduction in deaths through primary fires
- 56% reduction in injuries through primary fires
- 45% reduction in injuries in dwelling fires
- 88% reduction in injuries in road vehicle fires
- 27% reduction in accidental dwelling fires
- 21% reduction primary fires
- 46% reduction in chimney fires
- 21% reduction in false alarms
- 12% reduction in deliberate fires
- 23% reduction in dwelling fires

SFRS continues to make the most effective use of its available resources in CFS work.

#### **Areas for further improvement?**

Further concerted effort required to identify and target most vulnerable groups/individual within the community.

## 4. How are we targeting our prevention, protection and community safety work?

- **Has it reduced the risk in the target areas?**
- **If so, have we reflected that in our planning?**

The Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) represents the overarching strategy to address the targeting of prevention, protection and CFS work. Underpinning many of the initiatives set out in the Service's IRMP was a Best Value Review carried out in 2005 entitled – The Retained Review. The Review was completed in December 2005 and included 27 recommendations necessitating an investment of over £1m in the Retained Duty System over a three year period, with the implementation of the review's findings undertaken through subsequent IRMPs.

Historically CFS work had been targeted in the county's two primary conurbations - Shrewsbury and Telford, resulting in significant reductions in the number of house fires and injuries. However, with introduction of improved risk-based planning the emerging risk identified was within rural communities, with a particular emphasis upon vulnerable persons (most notably elderly persons living alone). As a consequence of the investment made through the Retained Review the Service has been able to engage retained duty staff and specifically appointed Retained Support Officers in targeted CFS work in high risk rural areas. Each year over £100,000 of that investment is utilised to fund the fitting of smoke alarms by retained personnel and to date almost 40,000 homes in rural Shropshire have been visited with over 16,000 smoke alarms installed. The Audit Commission in their 2008/09 'Direction of Travel' assessment of SFRS commented: *"The high level of prevention activity continues to significantly reduce risk in rural communities."* The Service has successfully been able to target CFS preventative work in those areas of greatest risk, with the Commission commenting: *"Water and road safety are key areas of focus. It is responsive to the needs of the communities it serves, through improved partnership working at a county level."*

In respect of "response" the Service has also made notable adjustments to the manner in which it delivers its services to the community. Examples of such adjustments to align resource to risk are:

- Relocation of one wholetime pumping appliance from Telford Central Fire Station to Tweedale Fire Station, leading to an average 2 minute reduction in attendance times.
- Introduction of eight-seater 'XL' appliances to retained stations enabling an increased firefighter attendance removing the necessity to unduly despatch multiple appliances and increase firefighter safety.
- Introduction of 'Resilience Officers' to support over-the-border and national incidents (e.g. large-scale flooding).
- Relocation of specialist appliances (environment unit, mini pumping unit and Level 3 incident command unit).
- Pilot evaluation of specialist vehicles (Small Fires Unit).

The Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) model is used within the IRMP process making it possible to determine how the predicted risk has changed as a result of a fall (or rise) in actual deaths and injuries. FSEC has predicted a fall in accidental fire deaths in vulnerable groups in Shropshire as a result of the vast amount of risk reduction work which has been undertaken.

### **Areas for further improvement?**

Further concerted effort required to identify and target most vulnerable groups/individual within the community.



## 5. Where have we made the majority of our savings so far?

- **How do we compare to similar fire services?**

SFRS's total efficiency savings during the period 2004/05-2007/08, as a proportion of the total expenditure in 2003/04, equates to 6%, whereas the family group average is 9% and the national average 10.2%. Whilst SFRS is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> position in the family group (29<sup>th</sup> nationally) a degree of caution must be exercised in undertaking financial comparisons to acknowledge variations in organisational structure (e.g. SFRS is the only combined fire authority within its family group, the remaining five FRSs are incorporated within county councils).

Whilst SFRS's level of savings are evidentially less than both the family group and national averages, the level of savings is arguably offset by the performance achieved through continued but prudent investment in the Service.

During the period 2004/05 – 2007/08 the Service has secured approximately £920k in efficiency savings, notable examples being:

- Revised crewing arrangements for Aerial Ladder Platform appliances - £259k
- IRMP efficiencies – £222k (including the reduction of 5 fire appliances -£90k)
- Management of vacancies - £100k
- Non-uniformed fire safety inspector posts - £42k
- Improved procurement management - £140k
- Management restructure - £73k

### **Areas for further improvement?**

The Service is cognisant that potential further efficiencies might be identifiable through exploring alternative crewing/staffing arrangements that do not compromise crew safety and response standards. The Service proposes to liaise with both UK and other European FRSs to identify alternative crewing/staffing arrangements capable of delivering cost benefits. It is of course important to recognise that the 5 wholetime appliances perform a critical operational and safety support function to the Service's 23 retained appliances.

## **6. How will we meet our share of the £110 million efficiency savings required?**

- **Can we beat our target?**
- **What priorities would the savings allow us to resource?**

The Audit Commission in their 2008/09 'Direction of Travel' assessment of SFRS commented: *"Value for money is good and improving and the service has exceeded its efficiency targets... The Service is well positioned to make further improvements with strengthened corporate and financial planning across improvement priorities and improved financial capacity."*

The Service's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2008-12<sup>5</sup> sets out the organisation's spending projections – both capital and revenue, for forthcoming years. The MTFP sets out the priorities for the Service, some of which will be funded through expected savings. The key priority area of spend has been determined through the IRMP process, namely the refurbishment of Shrewsbury Fire Station, Brigade Headquarters and Brigade Workshops. The refurbishment project will involve an estimated spend of £4m and will create a range of modern facilities for the local community and staff alike.

A further priority is the expansion of the cadre of Retained Support Officers to create Retained Development Teams responsible for improved management and training arrangements at retained stations across the county. Potential funding (£500k) for this priority may arise through further changes to 'ridership' levels at wholetime stations, releasing 8 wholetime firefighter positions for redeployment.

### **Areas for further improvement?**

As set out elsewhere in this report, the Service is cognisant that potential further efficiencies might be identifiable through exploring alternative crewing/staffing arrangements that do not compromise crew safety and response standards. Ridership levels at wholetime stations will be explored through liaison with both UK and other European FRSs to identify alternative crewing/staffing arrangements capable of delivering cost benefits.

## 7. Can we save money by changing crewing or shift arrangements?

- **Can shift arrangements be changed?**
- **Can any wholetime stations be converted to day crewed?**
- **Can some cover currently provided by wholetime crews be covered by crews on the RDS?**
- **Can smaller vehicles and crews be deployed to deal with smaller incidents?**
- **What have other fire services like ours done?**

There is arguably always scope to review and change shift arrangements and undoubtedly in predominately larger wholetime FRSs such changes can generate significant savings. However, in Shropshire, with only five wholetime pumping appliances, and a wholetime establishment that represents a mere 0.5% of the nation's wholetime resources, such changes would deliver little efficiencies when considered in the broader context. Notwithstanding the latter, several initiatives have been undertaken to make the most effective use of the limited wholetime resources available.

As part of the Service's 2006/07 IRMP, staffing arrangements were reviewed, with the conclusion reached that Service's two Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALP), which at that time were both permanently crewed, could be alternate crewed, releasing eight wholetime posts (representing £200k revenue costs) for redeployment as RSOs.

As an outcome of the 2007/08 IRMP, one wholetime pumping appliance from Telford Central Fire Station was redeployed on a permanent basis to Tweedale Fire Station.

To enhance resilience, without additional cost, mutual aid arrangements have been introduced at a Gold Command level between SFRS and H&WFRS.

SFRS is predominately a 'RDS' FRS, with the wholetime resource providing a safety critical function in supporting RDS personnel in both training and command/incident support. Notwithstanding the latter, RDS personnel have, for many years, undertaken specialist functions within SFRS, functions (e.g. crewing of specialist vehicles – High/Mini Volume Pumping Units, Environment Unit, Water Bowser, 6WD off-road appliance, Land Rover pumps, etc) that in many other FRSs would be performed by wholetime personnel.

During the 2007/08 IRMP a comprehensive pilot trial and evaluation was undertaken to assess the viability of introducing a 'Small Fires Unit' (SFU) on a permanent basis. The trial found that whilst such vehicles had advantages, the overall benefits did not represent value for money. Notwithstanding the latter, arrangements do exist to introduce a SFU, crewed by retained firefighters, should circumstances necessitate such use (e.g. during protracted hot summer periods where the Service experiences spate conditions in respect of small fires).

### **Areas for further improvement?**

Despite a number of changes to staffing arrangements having taken place, SFRS will liaise with other FRSs (particularly Merseyside and Manchester) to explore opportunities to improve value for money within wholetime staffing arrangements and seek to explore and evaluate alternative shift systems that have been introduced in recent years.

It is noted that some other FRSs have introduced SFUs but experiences within Shropshire have concluded that little benefit can be derived in a rural county other than during spate conditions.

## 8. Do we match cover and resources to risks?

- **Do we know which areas have highest and lowest risk?**
- **Can cover be safely reduced in low risk areas, for example during off-peak periods?**
- **What have other fire services done in similar areas?**

The Service's IRMP<sup>6</sup> process, dating back to 2004/05, has in a structured manner reviewed and refined the provision of resource to '*design by demand*' a risk based Service.

The IRMP has, through the use of national FSEC tool coupled with the Service's own risk management tools (SFWeb and PlanWeb), developed a comprehensive risk profile of the community and associated risks. The IRMP has successfully determined a risk categorisation for the county's communities (High – Medium – Low) matched by meaningful response standards without unduly compromising safety. The response standards are supplemented by resilience standards, ensuring that during periods of unusually high demand all appropriate measures will be taken to secure a maximum attendance time of 20 minutes anywhere within the county. Such standards maximise the effectiveness of the Service's resources, particularly in respect of RDS personnel. It should be remembered that 23 (82%) of the Service's 28 pumping appliances are based at RDS stations and as such, are only utilised (and attract additional cost implications) when required.

From a preventative perspective this has enabled a more strategic and focused approach to be taken to the undertaking of CFS, particularly with regards to HFSCs. From a protection perspective, the most notable and recent example of match cover to risk was the outcome of the 2007/08 IRMP, where one wholtime pumping appliance from Telford Central Fire Station was redeployed on a permanent basis to Tweedale Fire Station. This move not only recognised that community within the vicinity of Tweedale Fire Station represented a greater risk; it also acknowledged that the central area of Telford could be served satisfactory with one pumping appliance from Telford Central Fire Station. The Service also, in the 2005/06 IRMP, reviewed its response to automatic fire alarms (AFA), resulting in a reduced attendance to one appliance (two to life risk premises during night-time hours) coupled with a vigorous AFA prevention strategy that has resulted in SFRS being the 6<sup>th</sup> best AFA performer in the nation.

The Service has sought to redeploy resources to where it can have maximise effect, as evidenced by a 61% increase in non-firefighter positions over an eight year period (2000-2008), leading to the introduction of specialist roles to undertake targeted risk-based CFS.

### **Areas for further improvement?**

Whilst SFRS has been active in aligning resource to risk the Service is not complacent in accepting that more could not be done. Consequently, the Service aims to liaise with Merseyside, Nottinghamshire and Norfolk FRSs to explore opportunities to improve the matching of resource to risk.

## 9. How well do we engage with the public?

- **How well do we make the case for efficiencies?**
- **How well do we explain the wider roles of the fire service?**

The Service is active in seeking public opinion concerning how services are delivered to the local community. Whilst deploying a variety of consultation and communication methods, the two primary means of seeking public opinion concerning efficiencies and the role of the Service are the IRMP and annual budget consultation.

The Service's approach to the consultation complies with guidance issued by both the Cabinet Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG). Additionally, the consultation process follows the recommendations of Opinion Research Services (ORS), who are independent research consultants contracted to assist with this and other consultation exercises on behalf of SFRS.

ORS, who undertook the 2008/09 budget consultation with public focus groups, found that the public were:

- Satisfied that the proposed precept [3.9%] represents good value for money and allows for extra investment.
- Concerned that FRS funding formula has led to Service's comparatively high precept, but the reasons were accepted and understood.
- Satisfied that the Service charges what it does in order to provide a necessary service and represents value for money.
- Of the view that they receive an excellent and improving service for the amount they pay through their Council Tax.
- Highly praising for the exercise of financial control within existing budgetary constraints.

The consultation feedback received during the IRMP process has been extremely perceptive and constructive. During 2008/09 the public indicated that:

- There is strong support for the Service's remaining IRMP Priorities.
- There is a higher level of support for the refurbishment of Shrewsbury Fire Station, Headquarters and Workshops (than that for relocation).
- There was unanimous support and recognition that increased Officer Cover Resilience is required.
- Overall there is a high degree of satisfaction with the Authority's IRMP consultation process.

The public can equally be assured of the Service's prudence in financial matters through the Commission's 2008/09 'Use of Resources' assessment. SFRS received the following judgements:

Element Score:	Auditor Assessments:
Financial Reporting	3 - consistently above minimum requirements - performing well
Financial Management	3 - consistently above minimum requirements - performing well
Financial Standing	3 - consistently above minimum requirements - performing well
Internal Control	3 - consistently above minimum requirements - performing well
Value for Money	3 - consistently above minimum requirements - performing well

The Audit Commission in their 2008/09 'Direction of Travel' assessment of SFRS commented: *"The Service is well positioned to make further improvements with strengthened corporate and financial planning across improvement priorities and improved financial capacity."*

## 10. Can we work better with our neighbours?

- **What options for working together have we considered?**
- **What benefits could we secure from each of these?**
- **Do we share our good practice with other fire services?**
- **When have we borrowed good ideas from others?**
- **How can the RMBs help us deliver better collaboration?**

SFRS is proactive in seeking out opportunities to work with neighbours, neighbours that also include North, and Mid & West Wales FRSs. Examples of regional collaborative working include:

- Regional Assessment Development Centre (including funding of a regional coordinator)
- Regional Health & Safety Practitioners Group
- HRM Practitioners Group
- Fire Investigation (protocols and mutual aid)
- Gold Command level between SFRS and H&WFRS
- Regional procurement strategies and supplier register
- Regional Treasurers Group
- Regional training and implementation strategy for New Dimension assets
- Regional Operations Forum and Regional Operations Team

SFRS is UK's leading FRS in utilising the opportunities to be gained from international collaboration with European FRSs. Since 2006 the Service has secured over 80 staff placements to FRSs operating in eight European countries. The placements, secured through the EC's Lifelong Learning Programme (Leonardo) have offered unparalleled opportunities for sharing good and innovative practice. The Service's branding strategy and refreshed corporate identity were influenced by European FRSs, and the Service's approach to the introduction of Positive Pressure Ventilation was facilitated through the Danish FRS – Falck. During 2009 SFRS will be working with Lodz FRS, Poland to develop new and initiative CFS strategies targeted at Polish nationals resident in Shropshire.

The day-to-day activities of West Midlands Regional Management Board (WMRMB) are managed through SFRS, with the Service providing the region's Programme Manager and Web Officer. WMRMB has been hailed by the Audit Commission as one of the country's leading RMBs, with the Commission commenting – *“The extent to which fire services are engaged in the RMB varies. In some regions, such as the North West and West Midlands, engagement is good and working together is bringing real benefits. In others areas, such as the South West, the fire services support their RMB but have been slow to exploit the opportunities of working together and are making less progress.”*<sup>7</sup> WMRMB has undertaken a major review to identify further options for collaboration. The review concluded that in addition to the many initiatives already underway, the greatest area for further improvement was through the sharing of knowledge and expertise. To this end, SFRS on behalf of the region has secured through West Midlands Regional Efficiency & Improvement Partnership (REIP) a grant of £175k to support the creation of a regional improvement group (RIG) within the region. The RIG, led by a regional performance board chaired by SFRS, will be responsible for undertaking a series of peer reviews within the region.

The Audit Commission in their 2008/09 'Direction of Travel' assessment of SFRS commented: *“It is responsive to the needs of the communities it serves, through improved partnership working at a county level... There is a clear commitment to the regional management board and other partners to increase capacity, gain resources and better deliver organisational objectives.”*

### **Areas for further improvement?**

SFRS is the recipient of the European Commission's Gold Award (2008) for excellence in international partnership working and was recently short-listed for the IDeA GO Award for partnership working. An area for improvement is the further dissemination of lessons learned through partnership working to other FRSs (which is already underway).

## 11. What activities are we engaged in with local partners?

- Which provide good value to the community for the time and money we spend?
- Have we prioritised those that support our objectives cost-effectively?

SFRS is engaged across a range of activities and partnerships with local partners to improve safety and wellbeing within the community.

Recognising that FRSS have a significant role to play in Government's agenda to support disadvantaged communities, SFRS has for many years been a key player in partnerships. More recently the Service has become much more focused on the most efficient and effective partnerships thus allowing the Service to use its limited resources in a more productive manner. This has resulted from a review of partnerships and the introduction a partnership strategy that has enabled the Service to accurately define and determine its participation and role, which is a outcome based risk-benefit approach.

The Service has acknowledged the need to be *local* in the way it delivers protection and prevention services. Learning from the engagement of retained duty staff with their local communities, the Service introduced a process of localising services to secure further focused improvements in service delivery. Mirroring the approach of partners SFRS have devolved the delivery and management of community safety to smaller 'cluster' areas in Shrewsbury and Telford. In striving to secure maximum benefits from the local engagement of Fire Authority Members the Service has also set up a Local Liaison Panel which enables Members in every constituent authority to have regular communication with their local Group Manager and frequent joint meetings to discuss local issues with Executive Brigade Management. Additionally, the Service has joined with West Mercia Police on the 'Partners and Community Together Meetings' and with Shropshire County Council (SCC) in "Lets Talk Meetings" to further this localism theme. SFRS is involved in supporting a number of other local partnerships, most notably:

- Safer & Stronger Communities
- Children and Young People
- Healthier Communities and Older People / Health and Wellbeing
- Sustainable Communities
- Rural access to services partnerships

With the recent creation of Local Area Agreements (LAA) the Service has been successful in securing the inclusion of national indicators NI 33 & 49 within the Shropshire County LAA.

The Audit Commission in their 2008/09 'Direction of Travel' assessment of SFRS commented: *"It is responsive to the needs of the communities it serves, through improved partnership working at a county level... There is a clear commitment to the regional management board and other partners to increase capacity, gain resources and better deliver organisational objectives."*

### Areas for further improvement?

SFRS recognises that further work is required to develop and introduce a more precise method of evaluating the outcomes and impact of partnership working upon communities. The Service is working with its partners within the Shropshire County LAA to develop such a methodology.

## 12. How will we increase the numbers of women and people from minority ethnic communities in our workforce?

- How are we increasing the representativeness of senior management?
- What have we learned from other fire services or other public services?
- How are we monitoring progress on the requirements set out in the equality and diversity strategy?

The Service recognises that an area for continuous improvement relates to the recruitment of females, not only within senior positions, but also across the organisation. The Service has 5.8% of females within 'senior management' positions, but only 4.7% within the operational workforce (compared to a family group average of 6.8% and a national average of 5.9%). All posts within the Service are subject to equality impact assessments to ensure all barriers to recruitment are, where reasonable practicable, removed.

Whilst recruitment levels of individuals from black and ethnic minorities (BEM) are acknowledged as being low within SFRS, when compared as a ratio to the local BEM community the Service is the best performing FRS within the family group and ranked 6<sup>th</sup> nationally. The Service does not however view this as a 'strength,' but moreover, a reflection of the low BEM numbers within the local populous, particularly so within rural communities where retained stations are located.

The Service has embraced the national Equality and Diversity Strategy and plays a leading role regionally in delivering the change required. The Service has secured, on behalf of the region's FRSs, £35k to support the delivery of diversity training. SFRS's commitment to equality and diversity is perhaps best evidenced through its attainment of level 4 of the Local Government Equality Standard and the implementation of a Corporate Equality Action Plan.

The Audit Commission in their 2008/09 'Direction of Travel' assessment of SFRS commented: *"The Authority is making an effective contribution to wider community outcomes and is improving access to services and its approach to equality and diversity."*

### **Areas for further improvement?**

An area identified for further improvement concerns the recruitment and employment of females and black and ethnic minorities into the Service. Whilst SFRS has secured level 4 of the Local Government Equality Standard in its drive to create and foster an organisational culture of equality and diversity, the Service recognises that there is still learning from others to be undertaken. The Service will liaise with family group FRSs to seek out innovative recruitment practices, particularly those targeted at females.



### 13. Is our fire service an organisation women and people from minority ethnic communities want to work for?

- What could we do to achieve that?

Clearly the Service wishes to continue the initiatives area underway to create and foster an organisational culture that promotes equality of opportunity to all, and not just for women and people from minority ethnic communities. The attainment of level 4 of the Local Government Equality Standard is evidence of the corporate commitment to the equality agenda. However, despite the Service's continuing efforts to widely advertise opportunities, it readily acknowledges that more could be done to attract female and black and ethnic minority applicants. To this end the Service has instigated the following:

- Taster sessions for females and black and ethnic minority potential applicants.
- Targeted awareness raising sessions.
- Local partnership activities with organisations representative of minority groups.
- Regional working to share knowledge/awareness of access routes to organisations representative of minority groups
- Targeted press and media campaigns (see opposite)



#### Areas for further improvement?

As set out as a response to the previous question, the Service recognises that further improvement is necessary in respect of the recruitment and employment of females and black and ethnic minorities into the Service. The Service will liaise with family group FRSs to seek out innovative recruitment practices, particularly those targeted at females.

## **14. What is our level of sickness absence?**

- **How does that compare with other fire services?**
- **How are we planning to reduce it even further?**

SFRS has, for several years, been proactive in driving down sickness absence levels. The Service has achieved for 2007/08 levels of 4.3 shifts/days per wholetime firefighter, compared to a national average of 7.7 shifts/days and an average of 7.1 shifts/days within the family group. SFRS is ranked as the second best performing FRS in England and the family group.

The Service's strength in reducing sickness absence is largely as a result of robust sickness absence policies linked to occupational health support and discipline arrangements. The Service has delivered quality absence management training to all managers within the organisation and routinely monitors both levels and causes of sickness. This process is overseen by the Fire Authority.

Arguably there is a significant link between sickness absence and levels of motivation in an organisation. SFRS were identified within the FRS Cultural Audit<sup>8</sup> as having the second highest motivated workforce in Great Britain.

### **Areas for further improvement?**

Despite being one of the nation's best performers in this area, the Service is not complacent with its achievements. The Service will liaise with the Isle of Wight (best performer) to seek out further improvement opportunities.

## **15. What is our level of ill health retirements?**

- **How does that compare with other fire services?**
- **How are we planning to reduce it even further?**

SFRS's levels of ill-health retirement are nil (0%) for the period 2008/09. The national average for the period 2007/08 (latest available statistic<sup>9</sup>) is 0.17% of wholetime employees.

The Service continues to be active in seeking alternative working opportunities/placements within the organisation for those who at any stage be deemed unfit for operational duties. Notwithstanding the latter, the Service is of course cognisant of the recent Court of Appeal judgement that has ruled that changes to guidance to the Firefighter Pension Scheme that enables FRSs to dismiss disabled and badly injured firefighters without a pension or redundancy payment is deemed to be *'unfair.'*

### **Areas for further improvement?**

Despite being one of the nation's best performers in this area, the Service is not complacent with its achievements. The Service will liaise with other FRSs to seek out further improvement opportunities.

## Reference Sources:

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- 1 <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=7639EA8B-CFC9-4B71-9077-8CE8E189BBF9&fromREPORTSANDDATA=NATIONAL-REPORT>
  - 2 Audit Commission (2009). Fire and Rescue Service Performance Assessment. Para 68. p24
  - 3 Opinion Research Services (2009). FRS Cultural Audit
  - 4 For further details regarding KPIs – view: <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/webimages/managing-the-service/cfa/auditperformance-meetings-data/pdf-206-2009-03-12-12-performance-assessment-key-performance-indicators.pdf>
  - 5 <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/docs/managing-the-service/finance/medium-term-financial-plan/2008-12-medium-term-financial-plan.pdf>
  - 6 <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/engine/managing-the-service/IRMP/IRMP-action-plans/2008-09-irmp-action-plan.htm>
  - 7 [http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/65813F7C-C7DB-41f9-BAD6-3EA0EE82B6DE/fireandrescueperformanceassessment\\_scores2007\\_final%20proof.pdf](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/65813F7C-C7DB-41f9-BAD6-3EA0EE82B6DE/fireandrescueperformanceassessment_scores2007_final%20proof.pdf)
  - 8 Opinion Research Services (2009). FRS Cultural Audit
  - 9 CLG (2008) Fire and Rescue Service Operational Statistics Bulletin for England 2007/08. p13

# Rising to the challenge

## ***Analysis of Data Source***

**Summary analysis of the information contained within the Audit Commission's "Rising to the challenge" data toolkit.**

## Introduction

This appendix looks in detail at all of the graphs and supporting data, provided to all fire and rescue services by the Audit Commission, in support of the “Rising to the Challenge” report. The graphs and data have been made available through the Audit Commission’s website;

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/firechallenge/>

and consist of a data toolkit built on the Microsoft Excel format.

The graphs contained in the toolkit reflect many of the graphs contained in the “Rising to the challenge” report, and use the figure numbers from that report as part of their titles. This enables fire and rescue services to clearly understand how the Audit Commission has interpreted each of the relevant graphs within the “Rising to the challenge” report (the main report).

The toolkit enables fire and rescue services to consider how their performance compares to that of their Best Value Family Group, as well as that of all fire and rescue services in England.

In addition to the graphs contained in the main report, the toolkit also contains a number of graphs that show each fire and rescue service’s performance against various measures over a 10 year period up to 2006/07. These “Time Series” graphs do not show the Family Group performance, but do give the national trend as a comparator.

The following table summarises the overall findings of this analysis. Where appropriate, the table makes a recommendation about how the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service should use the outcome from the analysis to help drive improvement, either in its own performance, or that of other fire and rescue services in the country.

The detailed analysis for each graph is given in Part A and B to this appendix.

**Summary table showing outcomes from the analysis**

Figure number	Performance Measure	Area of Strength or Improvement for Shropshire	Recommended action to be taken by the brigade
3	Net expenditure per head, 2007/08(population estimate)	Improvement	Benchmark against Gloucestershire
4	Real term change in expenditure by baseline expenditure	Not determinable	-
6	Real terms change in expenditure by efficiency savings	Improvement	This performance will be improved as a consequence of this year's proposals under IRMP. This should put our performance in line with the national average.
7	Total efficiency savings 2004/05-2007/08, as a proportion of total expenditure in 2003/04.	Improvement	Benchmark with Northumberland.
9	% change in firefighters, 1997-2008	Strength	Continue to share good practice on RDS improvements with other Brigades
10	% change in non-firefighters, 2000-2008	Both Strength and Improvement	Promote current good practice with non-uniformed changes; and Benchmark with Northumberland.
14	Total savings from revised shift systems/crewing arrangements, 2004/05-2007/08, per whole-time FTE firefighter (2003)	Improvement	This performance will be improved as a consequence of this year's proposals under IRMP. This is likely to double our performance in this measure.
15	All incidents per station, 2006/07	Improvement	Although our performance is in line with the average for the Family Group, there may be benefit in exploring the reasons for Warwickshire performing slightly better in this measure.
16	All incidents per appliance, 2006/07	Both Strength and Improvement	Introduction of XL cabs (reducing number of appliances by 5) will have helped us to be above the Family Group average. Other Brigades are now becoming interested in XL cabs. and There may be benefit in exploring the reasons for Warwickshire performing slightly better in this measure.

Figure number	Performance Measure	Area of Strength or Improvement for Shropshire	Recommended action to be taken by the brigade
22	% change in accidental dwelling fires (ADF)	Both Strength and Improvement	Although performance is already in top quartile, benchmarking with the Isle of Wight may identify further improvements.
23	% change in deliberate road vehicle fires	Strength	Promote good practice around partnership working in Shropshire.
24	HFSCs from Oct 04 to Mar 08, as % of dwellings	Both Strength and Improvement	Need to promote good practice in relation to RDS involvement in CFS. and Need to ensure that HFSCs are targeting the most vulnerable.
25	Public satisfaction with the fire service varies.	Neither	No specific action identified.
29	Change in primary fires by change in expenditure	Not determinable	-
30	Change in accidental fires in the home by HFSCs – 2004/05 to 2007/08	Not determinable	-
35	Ratio of BME operational staff to local population, 2008	Strength	Share good practice if asked.
36	% operational staff – female, March 2008	Improvement	Benchmark with Gloucestershire.
37	Shift/days lost per person due to sickness (wholtime firefighters)	Strength	Share good practice with other brigades.
41	Total funding	Not determinable	-
41	Formula Grant – needs amount	Not determinable	-
41	Formula Grant – resources, central and damping	Not determinable	-



Figure number	Performance Measure	Area of Strength or Improvement for Shropshire	Recommended action to be taken by the brigade
44	Baseline against change over time: Accidental dwelling fires	Not determinable	-
45	Baseline against change over time: Deliberate road vehicle fires	Not determinable	-
46	Baseline against change over time: Proportion of female operational staff	Not determinable	-
TS	Primary fires, 1997/98-2006/07	Neither	No specific action identified
TS	Secondary fires 1997/98-2006/07	Improvement	Need to ascertain why Shropshire's trend has varied from the national trend since 2004/05.
TS	Chimney fires, 1997/98-2006/07	Neither	No specific action identified.
TS	False alarms, 1997/98-2006/07	Strength	Share good practice with other Brigades.
TS	Deliberate fires, 1997/98-2006/07	Neither	No specific action identified.
TS	Dwelling fires, 1997/98-2006/07	Neither	No specific action identified.
TS	Accidental dwelling fires, 1997/98-2006/07	Neither	No specific action identified.
TS	Deliberate road vehicle fires, 1997/98-2006/07	Strength	Share good practice in relation to partnership working in this area.
TS	All injuries in primary fires, 1997/98-2006/07	Strength	Share good practice in risk reduction initiatives.

Figure number	Performance Measure	Area of Strength or Improvement for Shropshire	Recommended action to be taken by the brigade
TS	Injuries in dwelling fires, 1997/98-2006/07	Strength	Share good practice in risk reduction initiatives.
TS	Injuries in road vehicle fires, 1997/98-2006/07	Neither	Need to determine the reason for the reduction experienced between 1997 and 1998.
TS	All deaths in primary fires, 1997/98-2006/07	Neither	No specific action identified.

TS - Time Series graph. Not included as figure in "Rising to the challenge" report

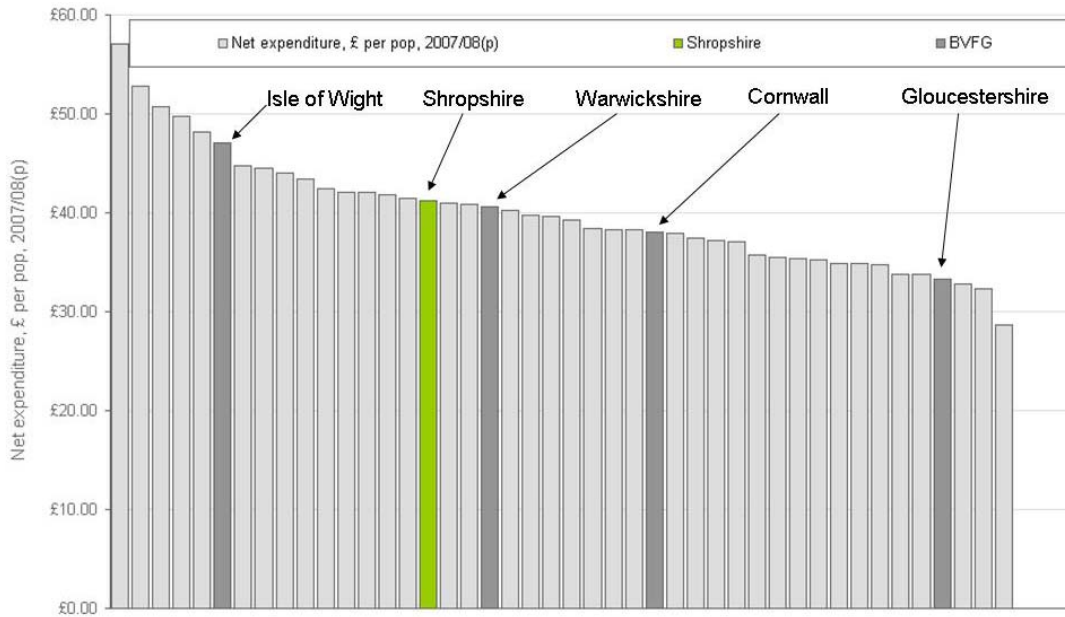
## **Part A**

### **Analysis of the data toolkit graphs that were originally included in the “Rising to the challenge” report.**

The graphs contained in this appendix are equivalent to the figures contained in the Audit Commission’s “Rising to the challenge” report.

The figure numbers included in each graph title relates to the equivalent figure in the “Rising to the challenge” report.

Figure 3: Net expenditure per head, 2007/08(p)



<b>Measure</b>	Net expenditure per head, 2007/08(population estimate)
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	There is variation in expenditure
Are there any queries about data quality?	Northumberland is not shown on the graph
Brigade view on what the graph shows	Although Shropshire is around the Family Group and National average, with three Brigades in its Family Group performing better, there is room for improvement. Shropshire is the only CFA in the Family Group – this may affect the ability to directly compare.

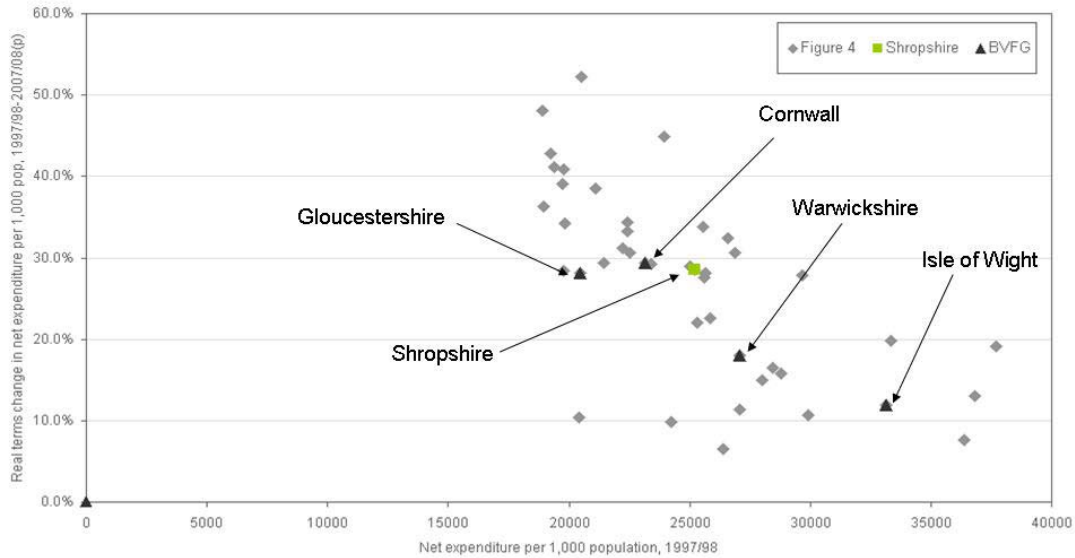
<b>Shropshire's data value</b>	£41.18
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<b>Family Group comparison</b>	
Family Group Position	4
Family Group Average	£40.04

<b>National comparison</b>	
National Position	29
National average	£41.89
National Quartile	3

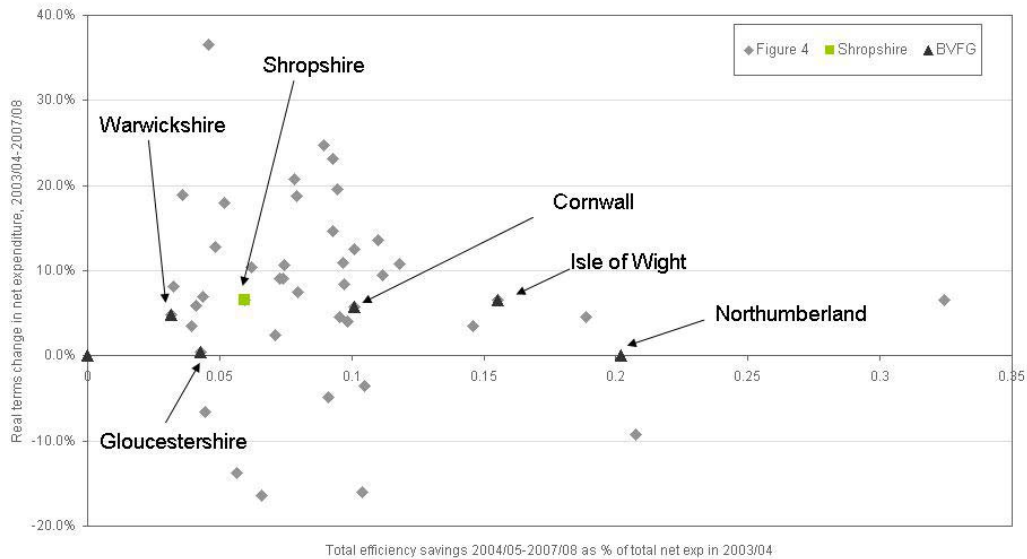
<b>Brigade Strength or Improvement</b>	Improvement
Action required	Benchmark against Gloucestershire

Figure 4: Real terms change in expenditure by baseline expenditure



<b>Measure</b>	Real term change in expenditure by baseline expenditure
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	Those fire services spending less in 1997/98 have tended to see larger increases in expenditure.
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	<p>Although the correlation may not be a strong one, Shropshire tends to agree with the Audit Commission's general interpretation of this graph.</p> <p>In isolation, the graph does not appear to be a useful improvement tool, but could be useful if integrated with other performance measures.</p> <p>There is no value in analysing this particular data any further.</p>
<b>Shropshire's data value</b>	<p>Net expenditure - £25,226</p> <p>Real term change - 28.5%</p>

Figure 6: Real terms change in expenditure by efficiency savings



<b>Measure</b>	Real terms change in expenditure by efficiency savings
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	Despite significant efficiency savings being reported over the last spending review period, almost all fire services are also spending more in real terms.
Are there any queries about data quality?	The data in this graph does not appear to reflect the data given in the report itself (factor of 10 difference).
Brigade view on what the graph shows	The graph shows that Shropshire is in amongst a mass of brigades. The better interpretation comes from the summary data table that shows similar data. The summary figures shown here relate to the summary data figures rather than the graph itself.

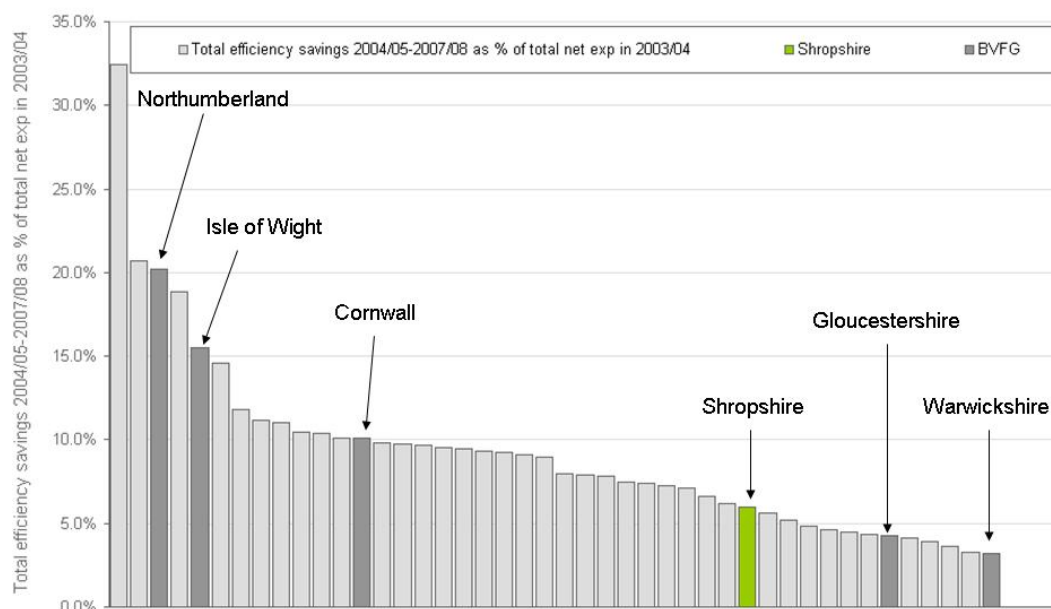
<b>Shropshire's data value</b>	6%
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<b>Family Group comparison</b>	
Family Group Position	4
Family Group Average	9%

<b>National comparison</b>	
National Position	32
National average	10.2%
National Quartile	3

<b>Brigade Strength or Improvement</b>	Improvement
Action required	This performance will be improved as a consequence of this year's proposals under IRMP. This should put our performance in line with the national average.

Figure 7: Total efficiency savings 2004/05-2007/08, as a proportion of total expenditure in 2003/04



<b>Measure</b>	Total efficiency savings 2004/05-2007/08, as a proportion of total expenditure in 2003/04.
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	The level of savings reported by fire services varies greatly.
Are there any queries about data quality?	There is some discrepancy between the tool and the graphs in the report. Northumberland (3rd best performer) is shown as a Metropolitan.
Brigade view on what the graph shows	There is wide variation in the savings reported across the Family Group members.

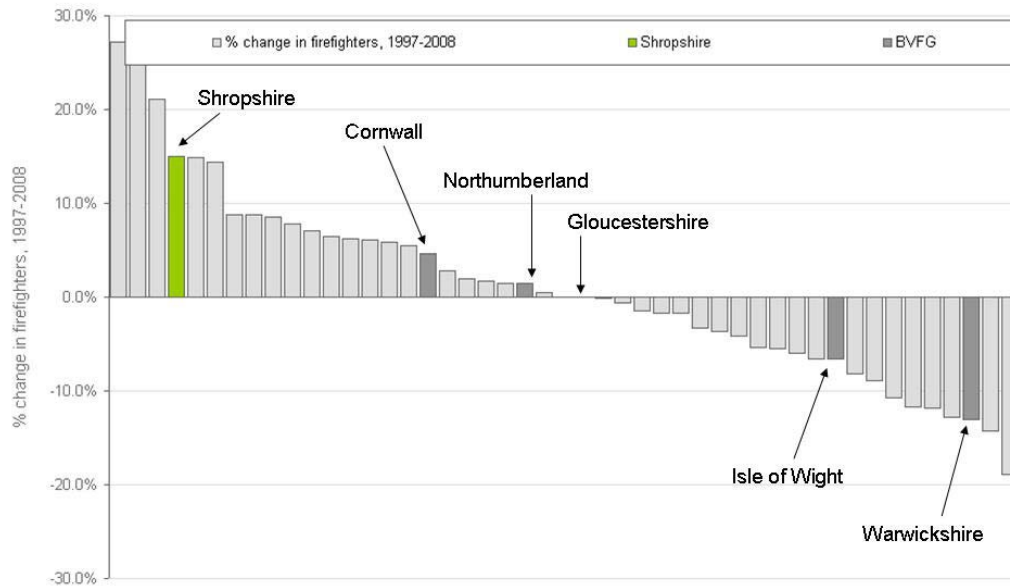
<b>Shropshire's data value</b>	6%
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<b>Family Group comparison</b>	
Family Group Position	4
Family Group Average	9%

<b>National comparison</b>	
National Position	32
National average	10.2%
National Quartile	3

<b>Brigade Strength or Improvement</b>	Improvement
Action required	Benchmark with Northumberland.

Figure 9: % change in firefighters, 1997-2008



<b>Measure</b>	% change in firefighters, 1997-2008
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	There has been significant variation in the change in the number of firefighters across fire services
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	The chart shows us with an increase of 15%, but most of this has been in relation to either increased numbers in RDS staff, or increased support for RDS (RSO's). Because of this, it is not possible to interpret the data in a way that accurately reflects performance improvement etc.

<b>Shropshire's data value</b>	15%
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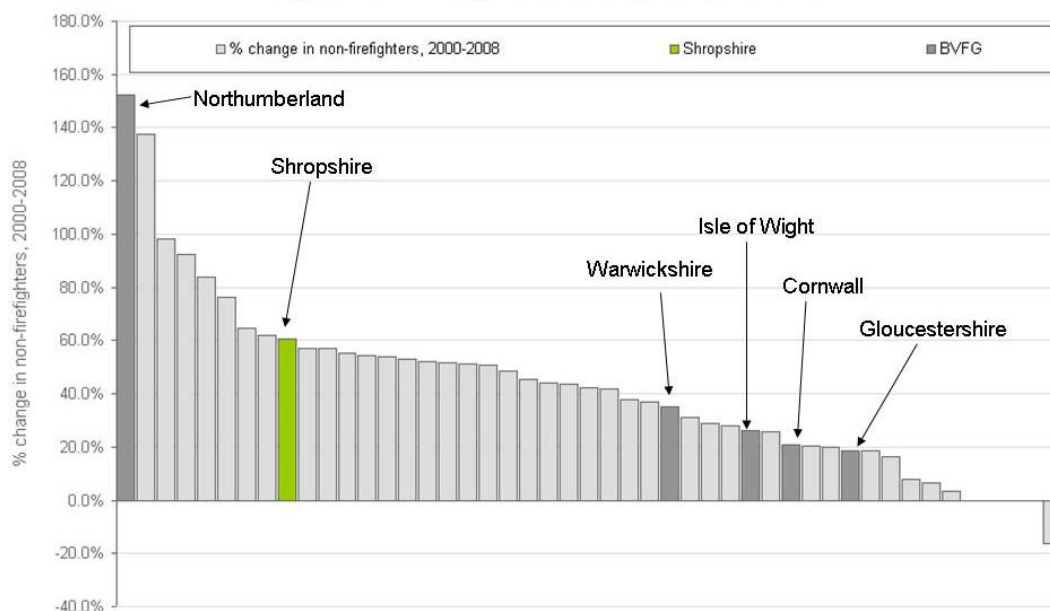
<b>Family Group comparison</b>	
Family Group Position	NA
Family Group Average	17%

<b>National comparison</b>	
National Position	NA
National average	2%
National Quartile	NA

<b>Brigade Strength or Improvement</b>	Strength
Action required	Continue to share good practice on RDS improvements with other Brigades



Figure 10: % change in non-firefighters, 2000-2008



Measure	% change in non-firefighters, 2000-2008
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	Most fire services have increased the number of non-firefighter staff
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	Arguments could be made either way as to what constitutes good performance. Shropshire's move towards increasing the number of non-uniformed positions doing prevention and protection work is seen by the brigade as a positive move.

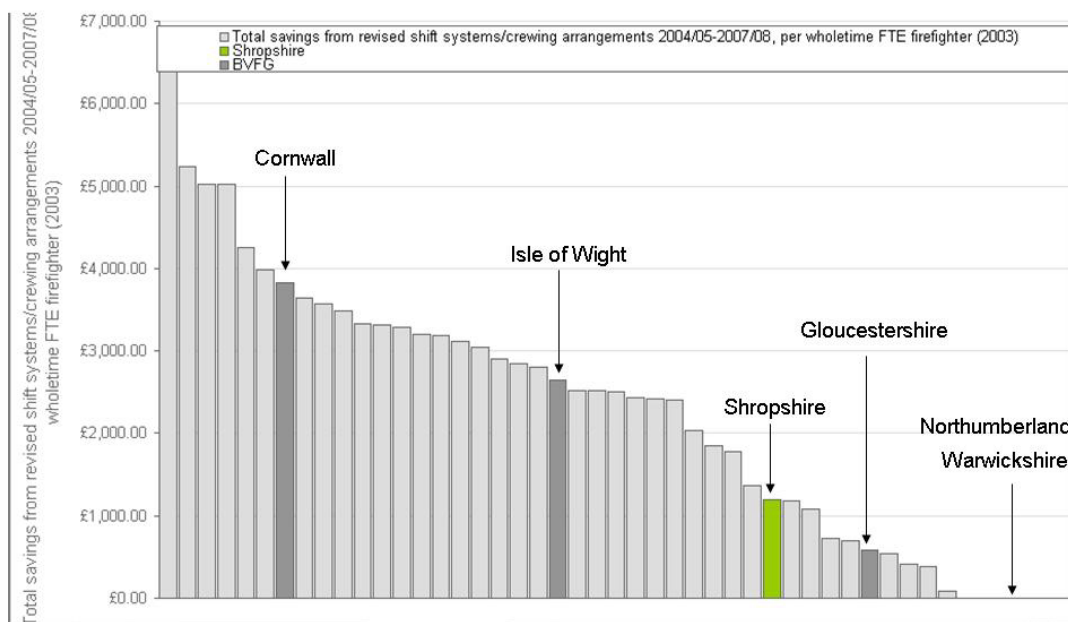
Shropshire's data value	61%
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Family Group comparison	
Family Group Position	NA
Family Group Average	16%

National comparison	
National Position	NA
National average	35%
National Quartile	NA

Brigade Strength or Improvement	Both Strength and Improvement
Action required	Promote current good practice with non-uniformed changes. and Benchmark with Northumberland.

Figure 14: Total savings from revised shift systems/crewing arrangements, 2004/05-2007/08, per whole-time FTE firefighter (2003)



<b>Measure</b>	Total savings from revised shift systems/crewing arrangements, 2004/05-2007/08, per whole-time FTE firefighter (2003)
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	Some fire services have made significant savings, while others have saved relatively little by changing crewing and shift patterns
Are there any queries about data quality?	Do not understand the reasoning behind including RDS staff (FTE) within this data.
Brigade view on what the graph shows	The graph would have been more useful if the base figure only included original number of whole-time staff as the comparator. Shropshire's figure is reduced because of the method used.

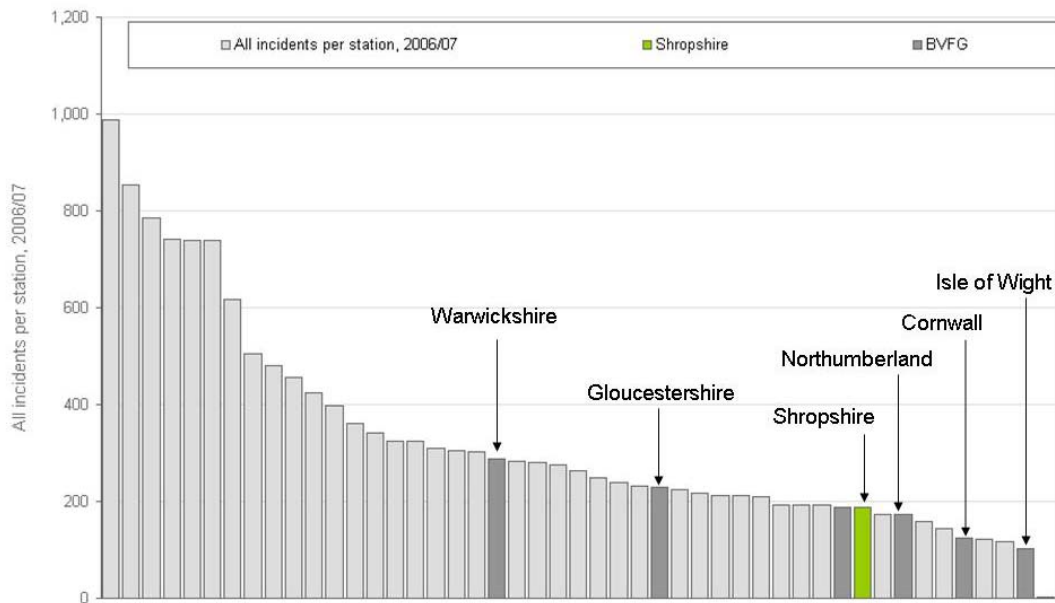
Shropshire's data value	£1199.07
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<b>Family Group comparison</b>	
Family Group Position	3
Family Group Average	£1377

<b>National comparison</b>	
National Position	32
National average	£2582
National Quartile	3

<b>Brigade Strength or Improvement</b>	Improvement
Action required	This performance will be improved as a consequence of this year's proposals under IRMP. This is likely to double our performance in this measure.

Figure 15: All incidents per station, 2006/07



<b>Measure</b>	All incidents per station, 2006/07
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	Station utilisation varies. Metropolitan fire services and some combined fire services can cover more densely populated areas with relatively few stations, compared to rural areas or coastal towns. But the variation is not completely explained by geography or population density.
Are there any queries about data quality?	The tool shows an additional ghost Brigade within our Family Group.
Brigade view on what the graph shows	The graph does not take account of whether the stations are wholtime or retained. As such it is a very rough tool.

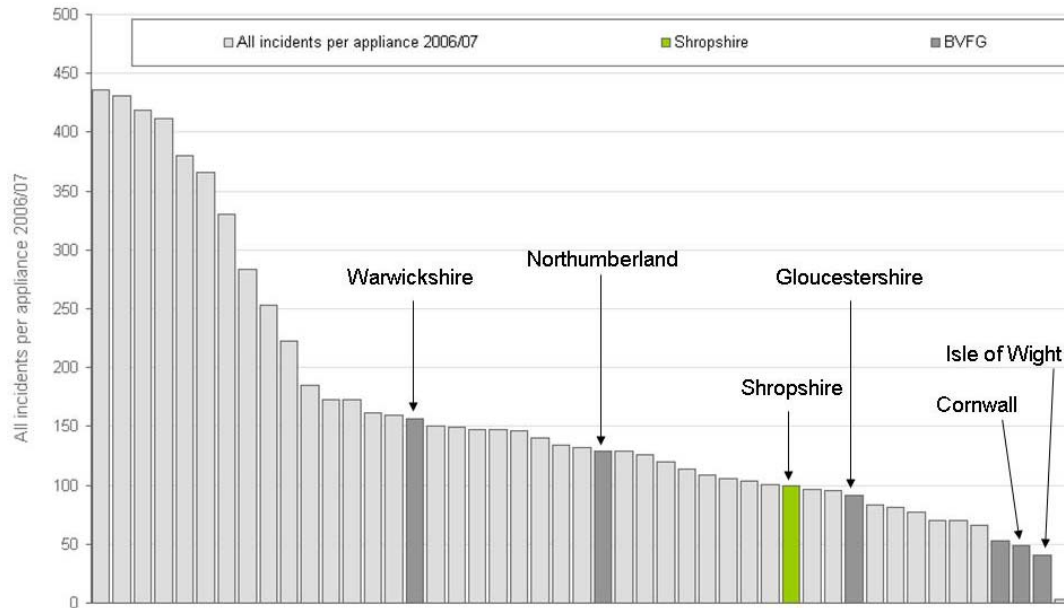
<b>Shropshire's data value</b>	187
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<b>Family Group comparison</b>	
Family Group Position	3
Family Group Average	184

<b>National comparison</b>	
National Position	38
National average	348
National Quartile	4

<b>Brigade Strength or Improvement</b>	Improvement
Action required	Although our performance is in line with the average for the Family Group, there may be benefit in exploring the reasons for Warwickshire performing slightly better in this measure.

Figure 16: All incidents per appliance 2006/07



<b>Measure</b>	All incidents per appliance, 2006/07
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	Appliance utilisation varies
Are there any queries about data quality?	The tool shows an additional ghost Brigade within our Family Group.
Brigade view on what the graph shows	The graph does not take account of whether the appliances are wholtime or retained. With so many retained appliances in Shropshire, we would expect to have a very low average.

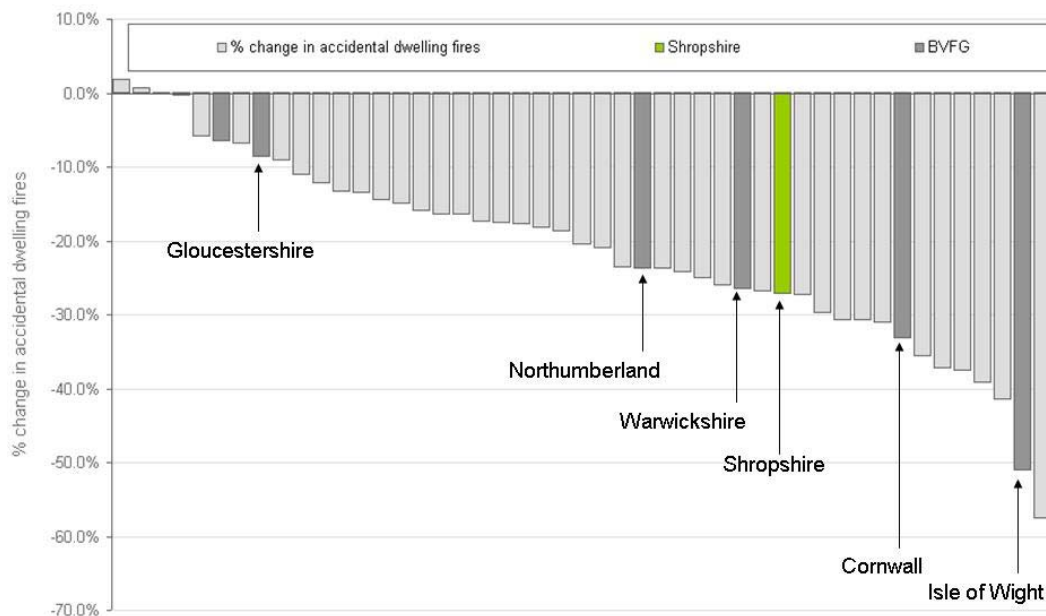
<b>Shropshire's data value</b>	100
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<b>Family Group comparison</b>	
Family Group Position	3
Family Group Average	88

<b>National comparison</b>	
National Position	34
National average	172
National Quartile	3

<b>Brigade Strength or Improvement</b>	Both Strength and Improvement
Action required	Introduction of XL cabs (reducing number of appliances by 5) will have helped us to be above the Family Group average. Other Brigades are now becoming interested in XL cabs. And There may be benefit in exploring the reasons for Warwickshire performing slightly better in this measure.

Figure 22: % change in accidental dwelling fires



<b>Measure</b>	% change in accidental dwelling fires (ADF)
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	Performance in reducing accidental fires in the home is extremely variable.
Are there any queries about data quality?	Inconsistency in the brigade's total performance (-23% in the Time Series graph, -27% in Report Profile table and Scatter Graph (above), and -31% in the Data Profile table). The ghost brigade is also shown as an additional Family Group member.
Brigade view on what the graph shows	This is a useful graph, when used in combination with the Time Series graphs. Data reported below is taken from the Report Profile (calculated based upon per million population data, rather than the above graph).

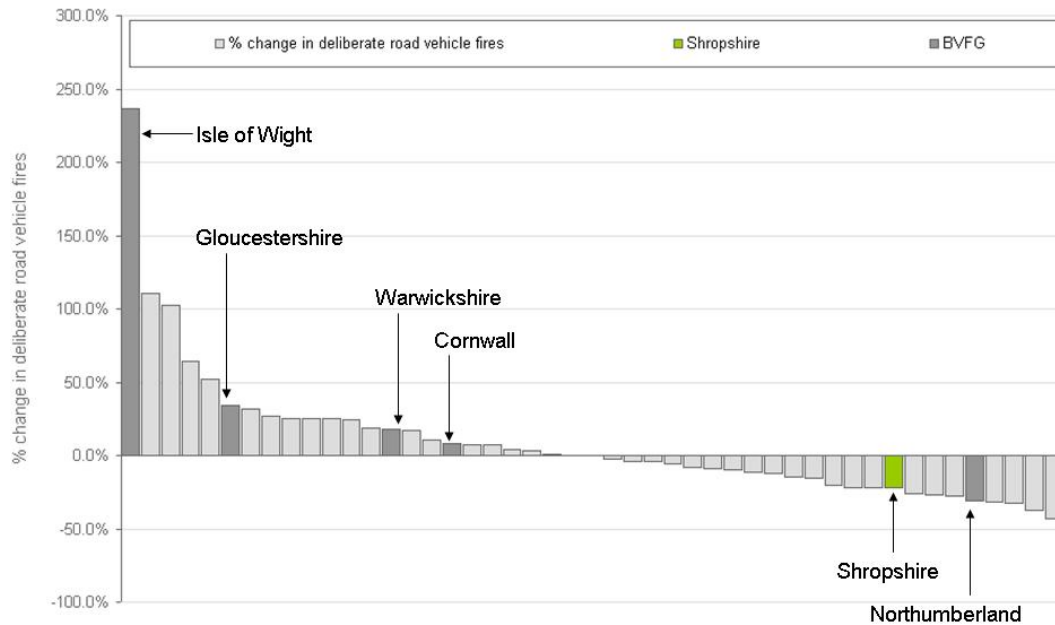
<b>Shropshire's data value</b>	-31% (Reduction in ADF per million population)
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<b>Family Group comparison</b>	
Family Group Position	3
Family Group Average	-27% (Reduction in ADF per million population)

<b>National comparison</b>	
National Position	11
National average	-24% (Reduction in ADF per million population)
National Quartile	1

<b>Brigade Strength or Improvement</b>	Both Strength and Improvement
Action required	Although performance is already in top quartile, benchmarking with the Isle of Wight may identify further improvements.

Figure 23: % change in deliberate road vehicle fires



Measure	% change in deliberate road vehicle fires
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	Performance in reducing deliberate road vehicle fires is extremely variable.
Are there any queries about data quality?	Inconsistency in the brigade's total performance (-20% in the Time Series graph, -22.3% in Report Profile table and Scatter Graph (above), and -27% in the Data Profile table).
Brigade view on what the graph shows	This is a useful graph, when used in combination with the Time Series graphs. Data reported below is taken from the Report Profile (calculated based upon per million population data, rather than the above graph).

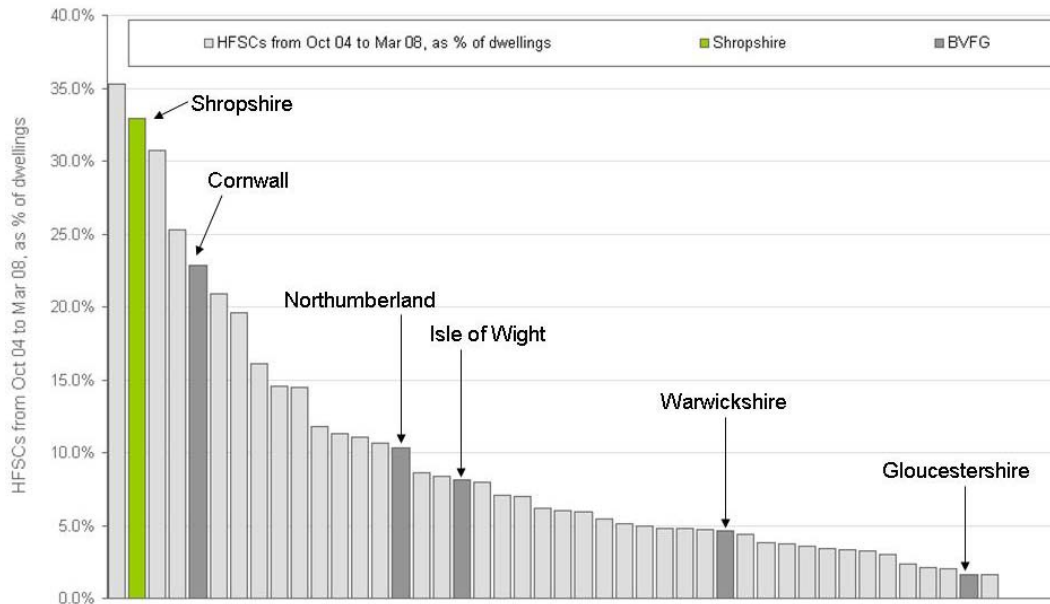
Shropshire's data value	-27%
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Family Group comparison	
Family Group Position	2
Family Group Average	-3%

National comparison	
National Position	6
National average	-10%
National Quartile	1

Brigade Strength or Improvement	Strength
Action required	Promote good practice around partnership working in Shropshire.

Figure 24: HFSC's from Oct 04 to Mar 08, as % of dwellings



Measure	HFSCs from Oct 04 to Mar 08, as % of dwellings
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	Some fire services have embraced the HFSC initiative more than others.
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	The graph demonstrates the number of visits the Brigade has made to date, but is not a good measure for how effective these visits are.

Shropshire's data value	33%
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Family Group comparison	
Family Group Position	1
Family Group Average	13.6%

National comparison	
National Position	2
National average	9.2%
National Quartile	1

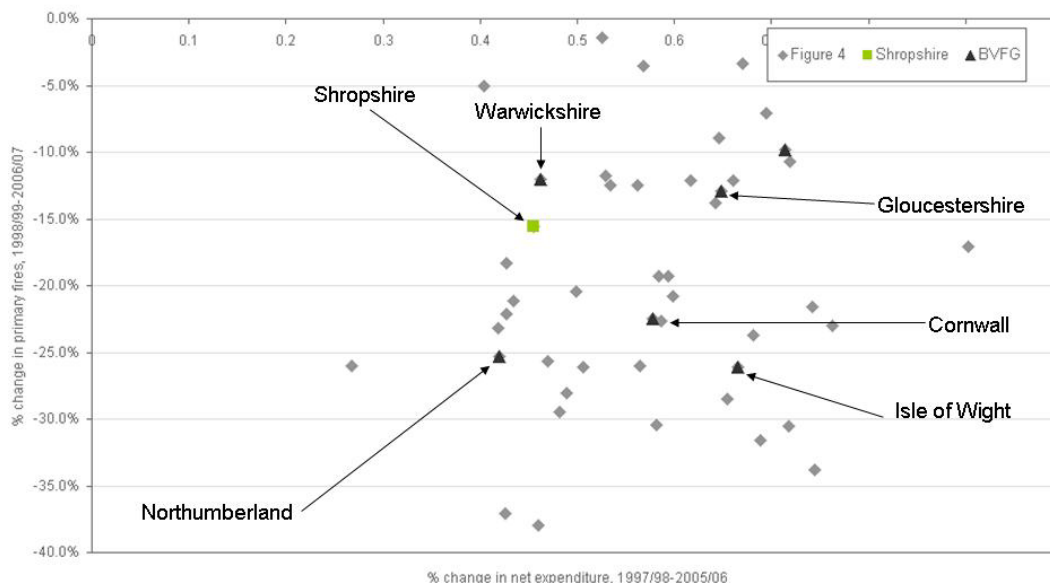
Brigade Strength or Improvement	
Action required	Both Strength and Improvement Need to promote good practice in relation to RDS involvement in CFS. And Need to ensure that HFSCs are targeting the most vulnerable.

Due to an error in the toolkit, **figure 25 – Best Value Public Satisfaction** - is not available as a graph. The table below summarises the data that is available in relation to this measure, within the toolkit.

Measure	Best Value Public Satisfaction
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	Public satisfaction with the fire service varies.
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	Graph not available.  Exactly what encourages the public to be satisfied with their fire and rescue service is very difficult to quantify.
Shropshire's data value	64%
<b>Family Group comparison</b>	
Family Group Position	1
Family Group Average	55%
<b>National comparison</b>	
National Position	13
National average	57%
National Quartile	2
Brigade Strength or Improvement	Neither
Action required	No specific action identified.

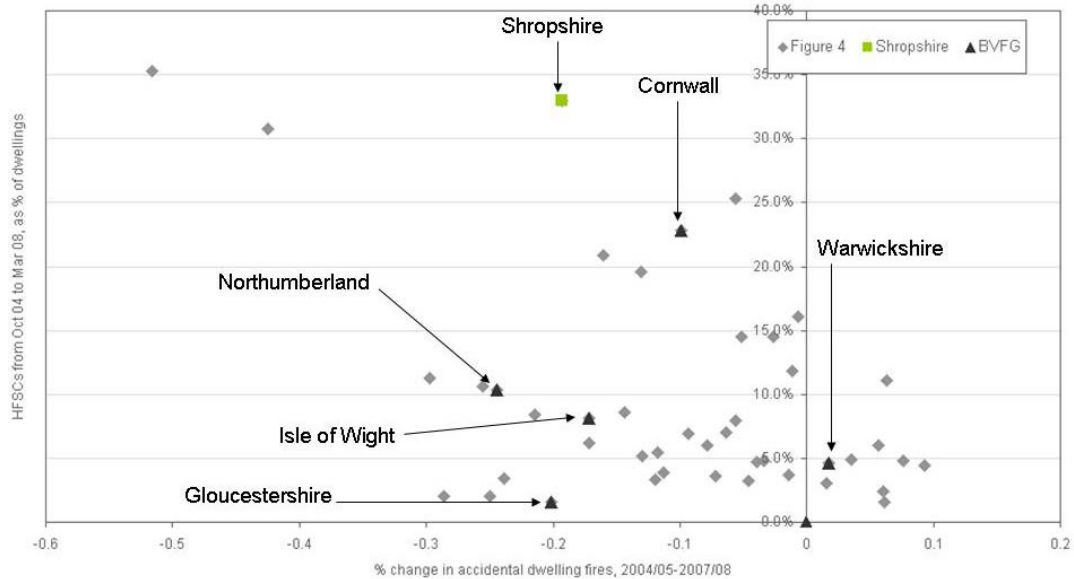


Figure 29: Change in primary fires by change in expenditure



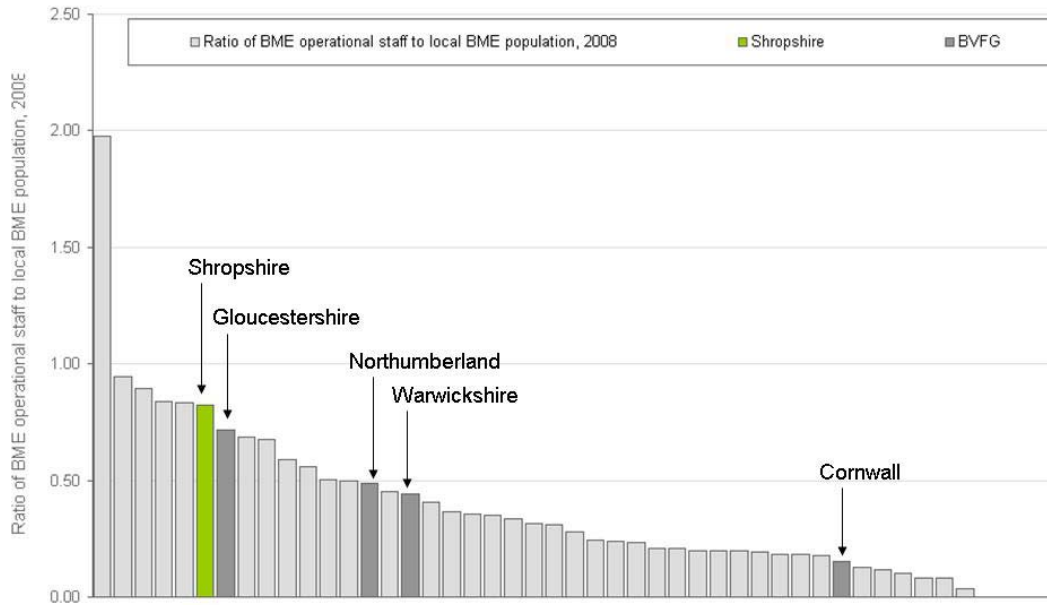
Measure	Change in primary fires by change in expenditure
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	There is no clear pattern between expenditure and reductions in primary fires. Determining the impact of fire service outputs on outcomes is difficult because many other external factors affect rates of fire.
Are there any queries about data quality?	Again, various figures are quoted in the tools for the supporting data behind this graph. Reduction in primary fire figures range from -15.6% (used in the graph above) through to -21% reported for the same period on the Time Series graphs.
Brigade view on what the graph shows	<p>The graph amply demonstrates that proving the link between CFS input and reduced risk output is no easy matter. The graph could simply show that increases in expenditure have not necessarily been invested directly into CFS.</p> <p>In view of its limited usefulness, combined with the questions over the supporting data, no further attempt has been made to analyse this graph.</p>

Figure 30; Change in accidental fires in the home by HFSC's – 2004/05 to 2007/08



Measure	Change in accidental fires in the home by HFSCs – 2004/05 to 2007/08
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	There is some suggestion that HFSCs are having a positive impact. Fire services that have covered the highest proportion of domestic properties in their area have seen greater reductions in accidental fires in the home in recent years.
Are there any queries about data quality?	No.
Brigade view on what the graph shows	It is difficult to determine exactly how best performance would show itself in this graph. Whilst the graph may provide some evidence of a correlation between number of HFSCs and a reduction in accidental dwelling fires, this is by no means a strong correlation. The graph therefore adds little to that already discussed as part of figure 24.  Further analysis, based upon this graph, has not been undertaken.

Figure 35: Ratio of BME operational staff to local BME population, 2008



<b>Measure</b>	Ratio of BME operational staff to local population, 2008
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	In all but one fire service, minority ethnic groups are under-represented among operational staff compared to the local minority ethnic population.
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	This graph does not reflect the new 10 year strategy, which measures % of all staff, not just uniformed. However, it does demonstrate good performance from Shropshire.

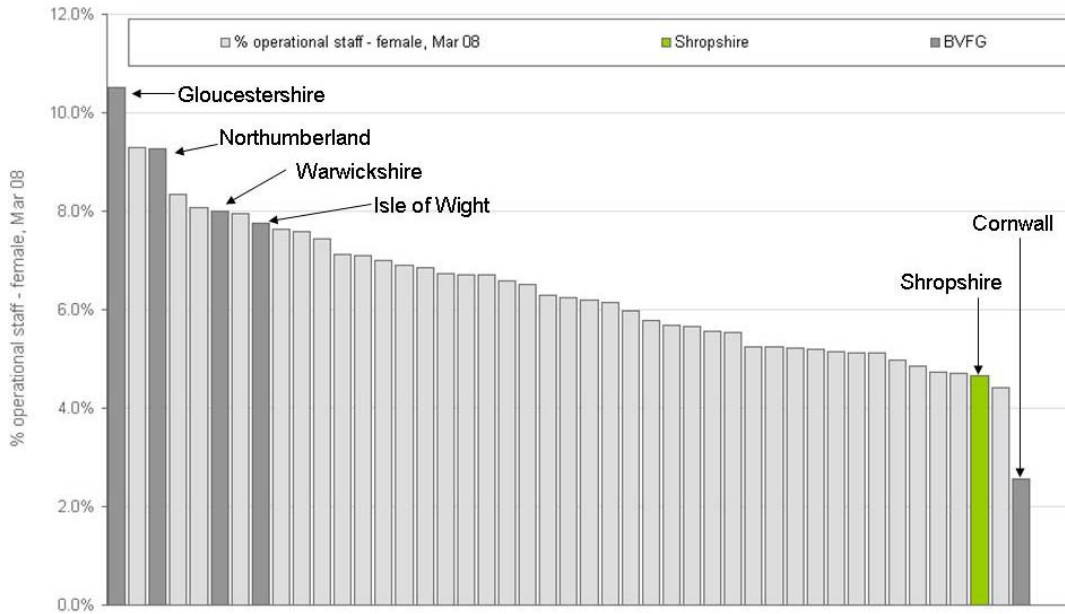
<b>Shropshire's data value</b>	0.83
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<b>Family Group comparison</b>	
Family Group Position	1
Family Group Average	NA

<b>National comparison</b>	
National Position	6
National average	NA
National Quartile	1

<b>Brigade Strength or Improvement</b>	Strength
Action required	Share good practice if asked.

Figure 36: % operational staff – female, March 2008



Measure	% operational staff – female, March 2008
Audit Commission’s view on correlation shown by the graph	In all but one fire service, less than 10 per cent of operational staff are female.
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	The graph is an effective demonstration of Shropshire’s poor performance in this area

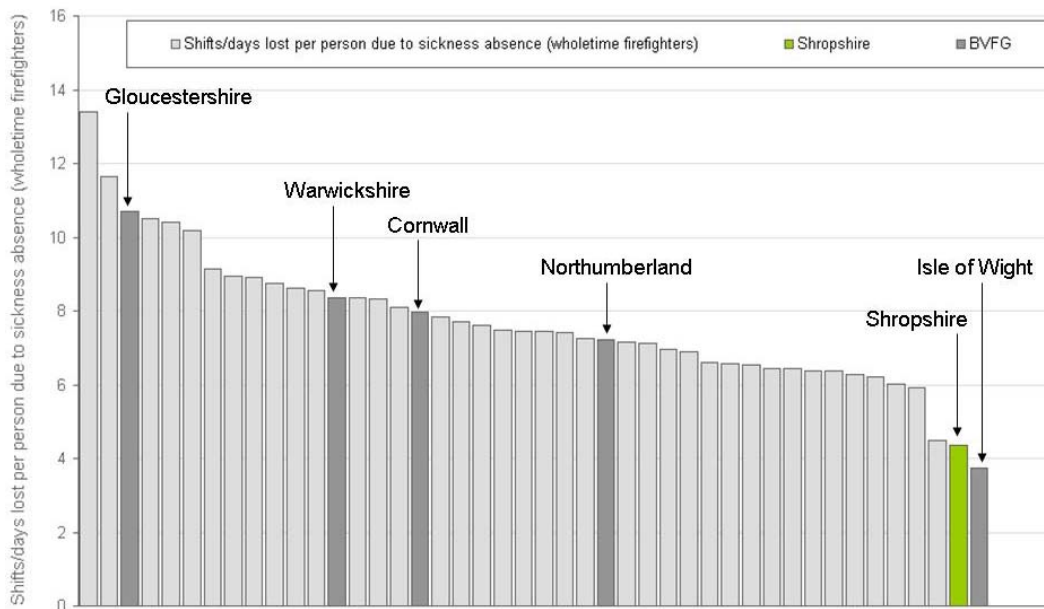
Shropshire's data value	4.7%
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Family Group comparison	
Family Group Position	5
Family Group Average	6.8%

National comparison	
National Position	43
National average	5.9%
National Quartile	4

Brigade Strength or Improvement	Improvement
Action required	Benchmark with Gloucestershire.

Figure 37: Shifts/days lost per person due to sickness (wholetime firefighters)



Measure	Shift/days lost per person due to sickness (wholetime firefighters)
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	There is scope for many fire services to reduce sickness absence further
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	The graph is an effective demonstration of Shropshire's good performance in this area.

Shropshire's data value	4.3
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Family Group comparison	
Family Group Position	2
Family Group Average	7.1

National comparison	
National Position	2
National average	7.7
National Quartile	1

Brigade Strength or Improvement	Strength
Action required	Share good practice with other brigades.

Figure 41: Total funding (FG- resources, central and damping, CT)



<b>Measure</b>	<b>Total funding</b>
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	There is significant variation in funding across combined and metropolitan fire services
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	<p>The following series of graphs, all labeled Figure 41, show how all Metropolitan and Combined Fire Authorities budgets are made up. With all other Brigades in our Family Group being County fire services, the graph does not support Family Group comparison. Figure 3 supports such analysis.</p> <p>This graph shows that Shropshire's overall funding level is around the national average.</p>

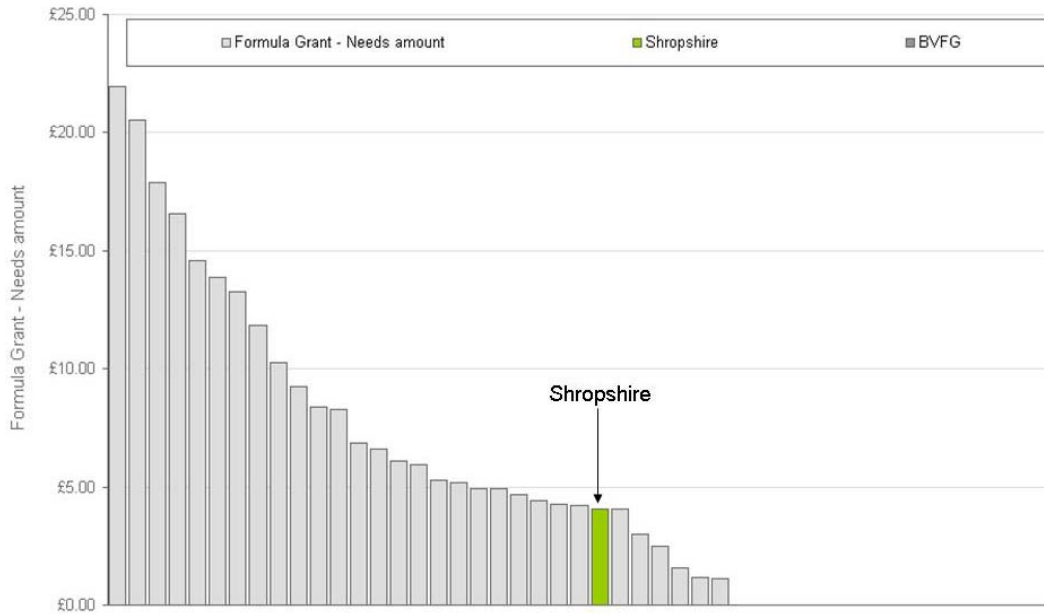
<b>Shropshire's data value</b>	£43.55
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<b>Family Group comparison</b>	
Family Group Position	NA
Family Group Average	NA

<b>National comparison</b>	Metropolitan and Combined FA's only (total of 31 Brigades)
National Position	12 <sup>th</sup> highest
National average	NA
National Quartile	3

<b>Brigade Strength or Improvement</b>	NA
Action required	NA

Figure 41: Formula Grant – Needs amount



<b>Measure</b>	Formula Grant – needs amount
Audit Commission’s view on correlation shown by the graph	There is significant variation in funding across combined and metropolitan fire services
Are there any queries about data quality?	See notes for previous figure.
Brigade view on what the graph shows	This demonstrates that Shropshire receives a low level of Grant from the Government.

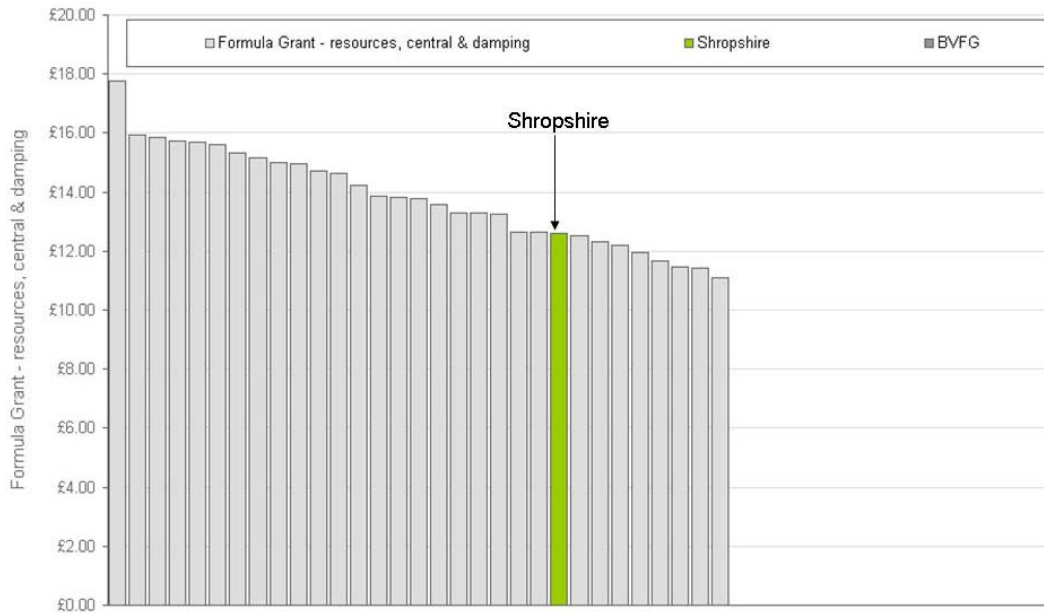
<b>Shropshire's data value</b>	£4.08
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<b>Family Group comparison</b>	
Family Group Position	NA
Family Group Average	NA

<b>National comparison</b>	Metropolitan and Combined FA’s only (total of 31 Brigades)
National Position	7 <sup>th</sup> lowest
National average	NA
National Quartile	NA

<b>Brigade Strength or Improvement</b>	NA
Action required	NA

Figure 41: Formula Grant – resources, central and damping



<b>Measure</b>	Formula Grant – resources, central and damping
Audit Commission’s view on correlation shown by the graph	There is significant variation in funding across combined and metropolitan fire services
Are there any queries about data quality?	See notes for previous figures.
Brigade view on what the graph shows	The graph shows that the element of the Grant relating to resources, central and damping, for Shropshire, is below the national average.

<b>Shropshire's data value</b>	£12.62
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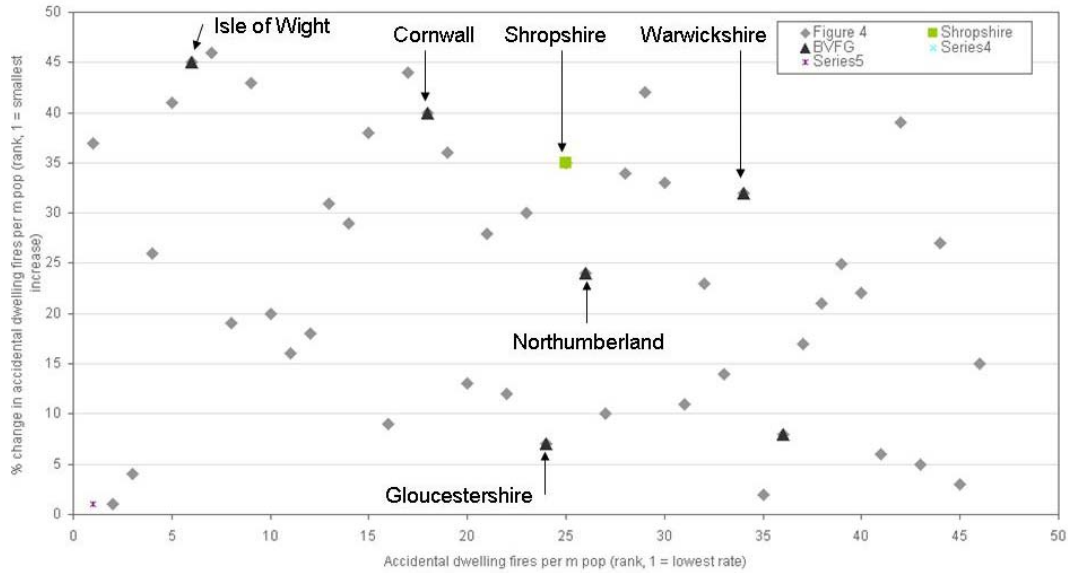
<b>Family Group comparison</b>	
Family Group Position	NA
Family Group Average	NA

<b>National comparison</b>	Metropolitan and Combined FA’s only (total of 31 Brigades)
National Position	9 <sup>th</sup> lowest
National average	NA
National Quartile	NA

<b>Brigade Strength or Improvement</b>	NA
Action required	NA

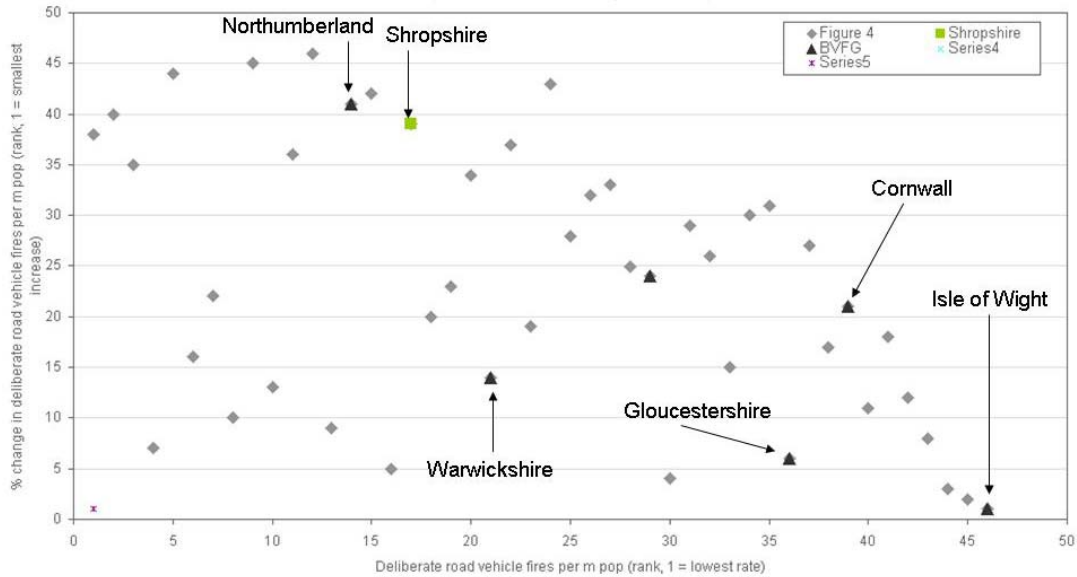


Figure 44: Baseline against change over time: Accidental dwelling fires



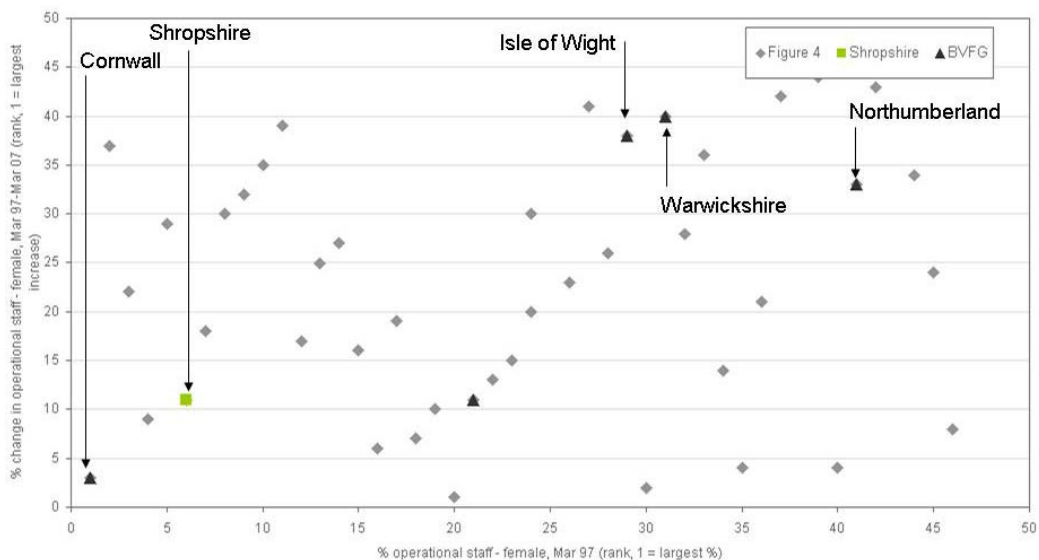
<b>Measure</b>	Baseline against change over time: Accidental dwelling fires
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	<p>Figures 44 to 46 are included in the appendix of the main report. The Audit Commission included them to compare the type of fire service and the improvement achieved.</p> <p>The Audit Commission makes no specific comment about these relationships within the report.</p>
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	The graph does not appear to show any correlation and is therefore not worthy of any further analysis.

Figure 45: Baseline against change over time: Deliberate road vehicle fires



Measure	Baseline against change over time: Deliberate road vehicle fires
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	<p>Figures 44 to 46 are included in the appendix of the main report. The Audit Commission included them to compare the type of fire service and the improvement achieved.</p> <p>The Audit Commission makes no specific comment about these relationships within the report.</p>
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	The graph does not appear to show any correlation and is therefore not worthy of any further analysis.

Figure 46: Baseline against change over time: Proportion of female operational staff



Measure	Baseline against change over time: Proportion of female operational staff
Audit Commission's view on correlation shown by the graph	<p>Figures 44 to 46 are included in the appendix of the main report. The Audit Commission included them to compare the type of fire service and the improvement achieved.</p> <p>The Audit Commission makes no specific comment about these relationships within the report.</p>
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	The graph does not appear to show any correlation and is therefore not worthy of any further analysis.

## **Part B**

### **Analysis of the “Time Series” graphs included in the Data Tool.**

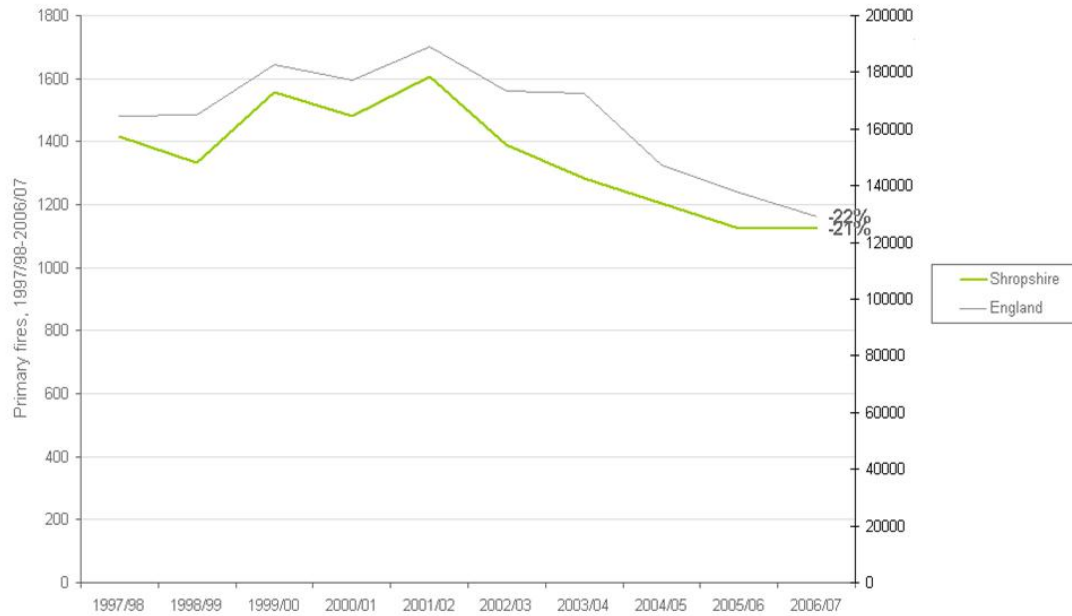
The following graphs are not included in the main Audit Commission report, but are provided as part of the Data Tool.

Each graph shows how Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service’s performance, against various measures, has changed over time. The Audit Commission makes no specific comment about the trends shown in these graphs.

Although the tool enables us to compare Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service’s performance against the national trend, it does not support a comparison between Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and the other services in its Family Group. For this reason, the analysis of these graphs is limited to the comparison between Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and the national trend.

The time period covered by all graph is the 10 year period 1997/98 to 2006/07

Primary fires, 1997/98 – 2006/07



Measure	Primary fires, 1997/98-2006/07
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	Shropshire has kept pace with the national trend. The drop during the period 2001/02 to 2005/06 was greater in Shropshire than it typically was nationally.
Shropshire's variation over the time period	21% reduction
National variation over the time period	22% reduction
Brigade Strength or Improvement	Neither
Action required	No specific action identified

Secondary fires, 1997/98 – 2006/07



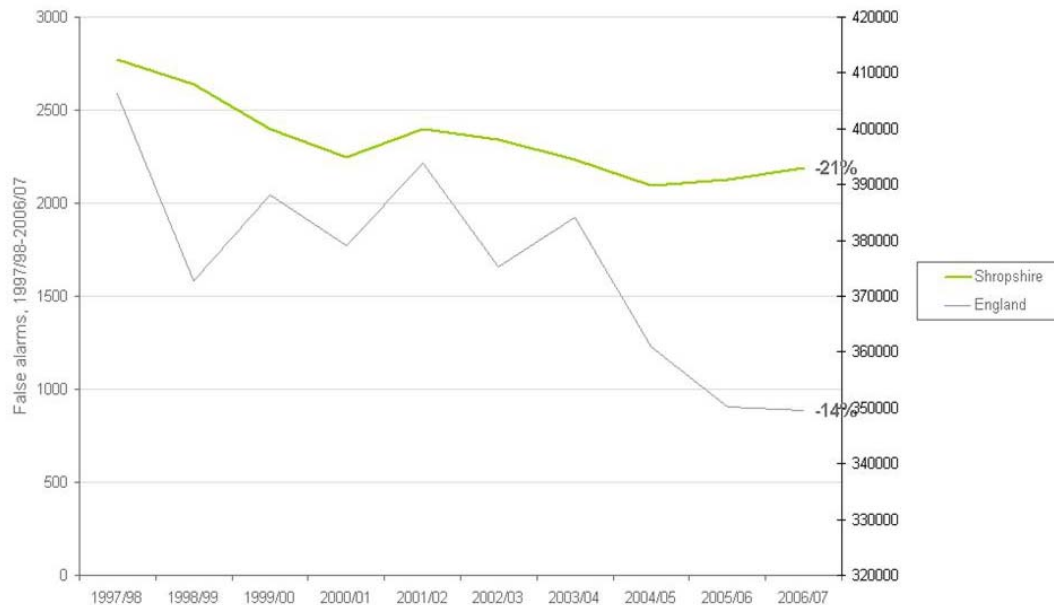
<b>Measure</b>	Secondary fires 1997/98-2006/07
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	<p>This measure may be susceptible to great influence from the weather. This could account for why Shropshire's trend correlates so closely to the national trend.</p> <p>Shropshire's rise in secondary fires, since 2004/05 appears to have been greater than that commonly experienced across the rest of the country.</p>
Shropshire's variation over the time period	38% increase
National variation over the time period	7% increase
Brigade Strength or Improvement	Improvement
Action required	Need to ascertain why Shropshire's trend has varied from the national trend since 2004/05.

Chimney fires, 1997/98 – 2006/07



<b>Measure</b>	Chimney fires, 1997/98-2006/07
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	<p>Shropshire's performance against this measure shows a very strong correlation to the national trend. The campaign has not specifically targeted this measure.</p> <p>Reductions might well be explained by changes in weather and the increasing use of central heating, rather than open fires, in the home.</p>
Shropshire's variation over the time period	46% reduction
National variation over the time period	48% reduction
Brigade Strength or Improvement	Neither
Action required	No specific action identified.

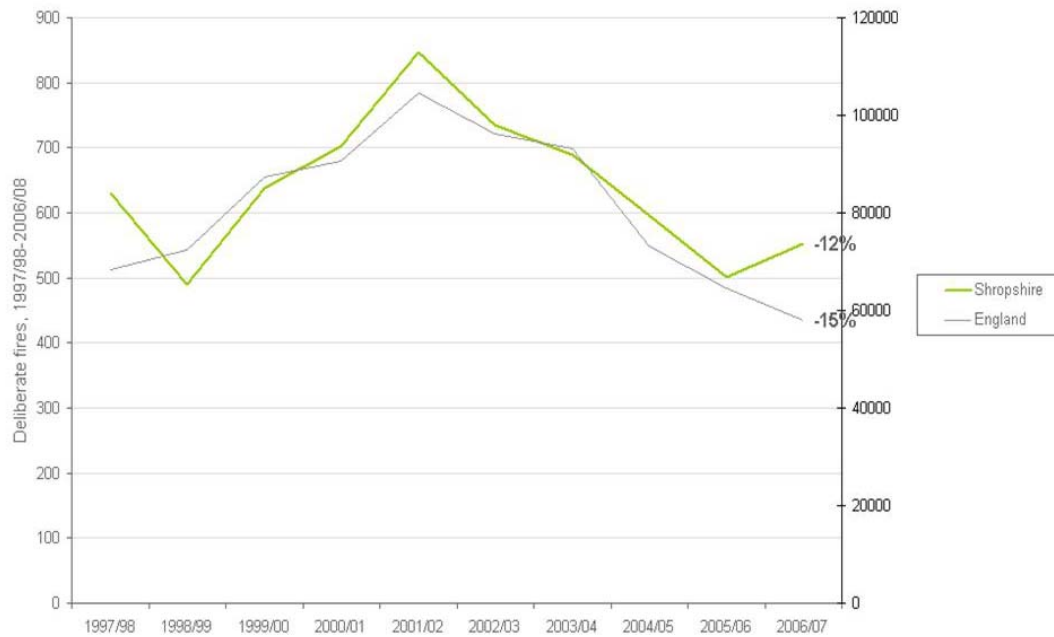
False alarms, 1997/98 – 2006/07



<b>Measure</b>	False alarms, 1997/98-2006/07
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	<p>The difference between the axis used to depict the two measures in the same graph (especially the national axis not going down to zero), does not enable a good comparison between the County and the national trends.</p> <p>It would appear that the national trend is subject to greater variation than Shropshire's.</p> <p>Shropshire's overall performance is greater than the national average.</p>
Shropshire's variation over the time period	21% reduction
National variation over the time period	14% reduction
Brigade Strength or Improvement	Strength
Action required	Share good practice with other Brigades.



Deliberate fires, 1997/98 – 2006/07



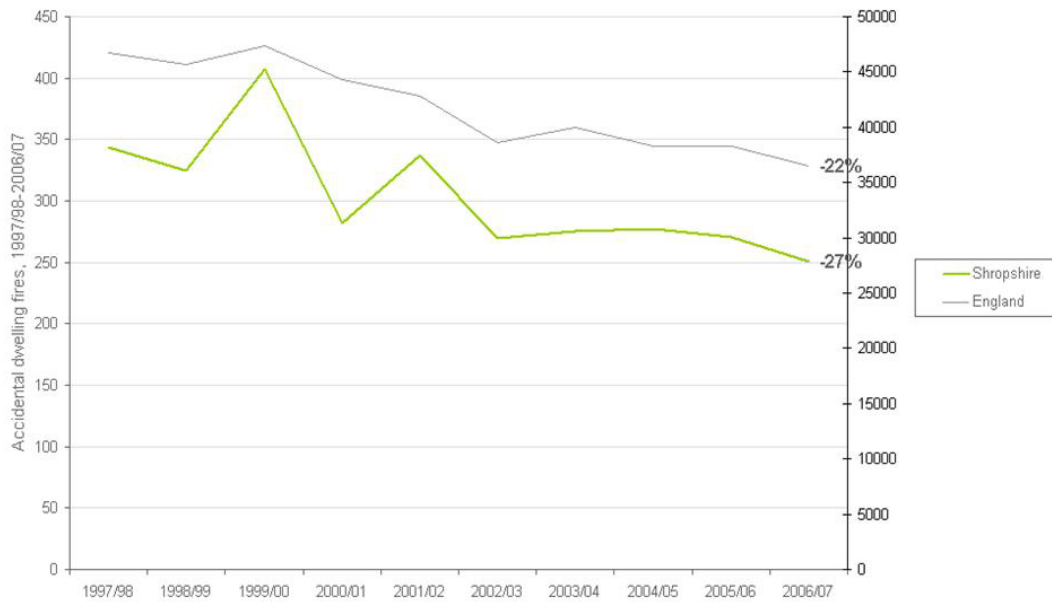
<b>Measure</b>	Deliberate fires, 1997/98-2006/07
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	<p>Shropshire's trend across the period correlates very closely to the national trend.</p> <p>The overall change in performance, over the period, is of a similar order in Shropshire, as that typically experienced in the rest of the country.</p>
Shropshire's variation over the time period	12% reduction
National variation over the time period	15% reduction
Brigade Strength or Improvement	Neither
Action required	No specific action identified.

Dwelling fires, 1997/98 – 2006/07



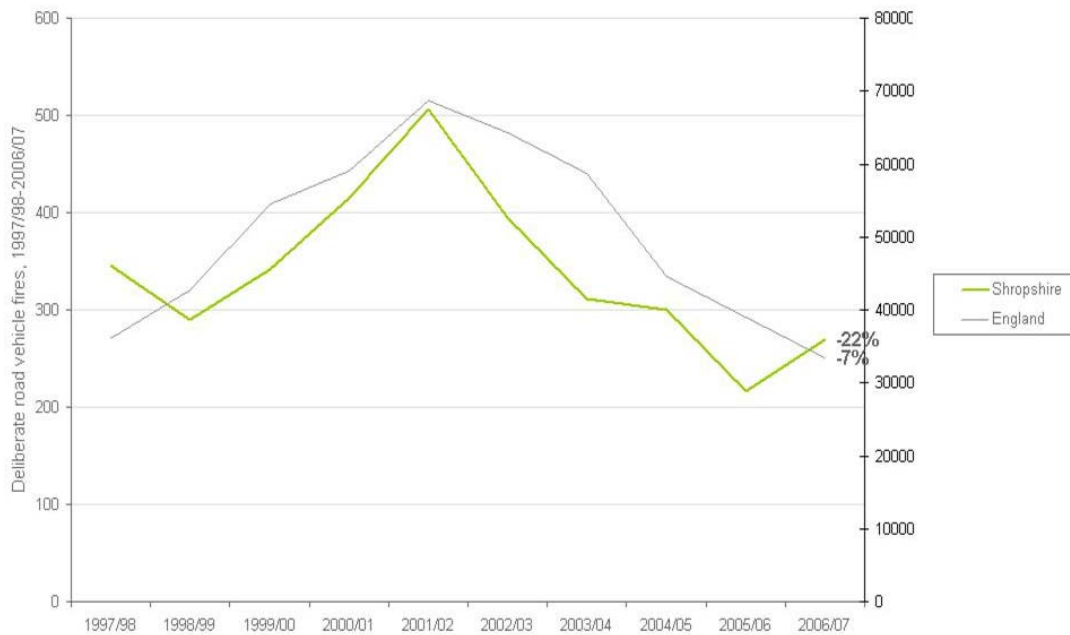
<b>Measure</b>	Dwelling fires, 1997/98-2006/07
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	Despite slightly greater variation in the numbers recorded during the period 1997 to 2002, Shropshire's overall trend correlates very closely to the national trend.
Shropshire's variation over the time period	23% reduction
National variation over the time period	23% reduction
Brigade Strength or Improvement	Neither
Action required	No specific action identified.

Accidental dwelling fires, 1997/98 – 2006/07



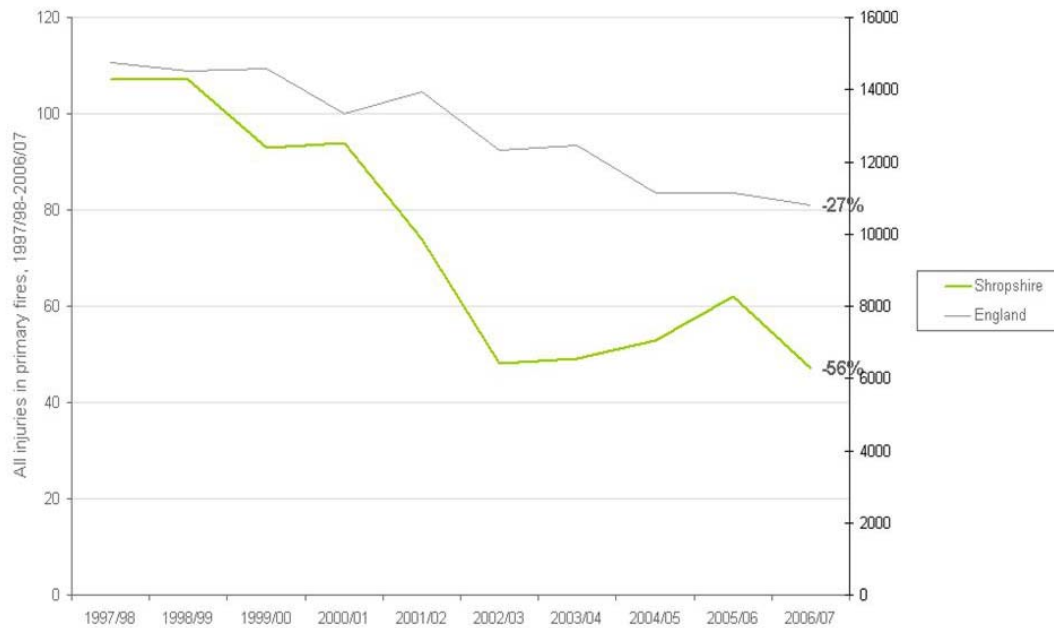
<b>Measure</b>	Accidental dwelling fires, 1997/98-2006/07
Are there any queries about data quality?	No.
Brigade view on what the graph shows	<p>Despite slightly greater variation in the numbers recorded during the period 1997 to 2002, Shropshire's overall trend correlates very closely to the national trend.</p> <p>Shropshire's overall reduction across the whole period is slightly greater than that typically experienced across the rest of the country.</p>
Shropshire's variation over the time period	27% reduction
National variation over the time period	22% reduction
Brigade Strength or Improvement	Neither
Action required	No specific action identified.

Deliberate road vehicle fires, 1997/98 – 2006/07



<b>Measure</b>	Deliberate road vehicle fires, 1997/98-2006/07
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	<p>Shropshire's trend across the period correlates very closely to the national trend.</p> <p>Shropshire's overall reduction, across the whole of the period covered, is three times that typically experienced across the rest of the country. This supports the conclusion drawn earlier in this report in relation to figure 23.</p>
Shropshire's variation over the time period	22% reduction
National variation over the time period	7% reduction
Brigade Strength or Improvement	Strength
Action required	Share good practice in relation to partnership working in this area.

All injuries in primary fires, 1997/98 – 2006/07



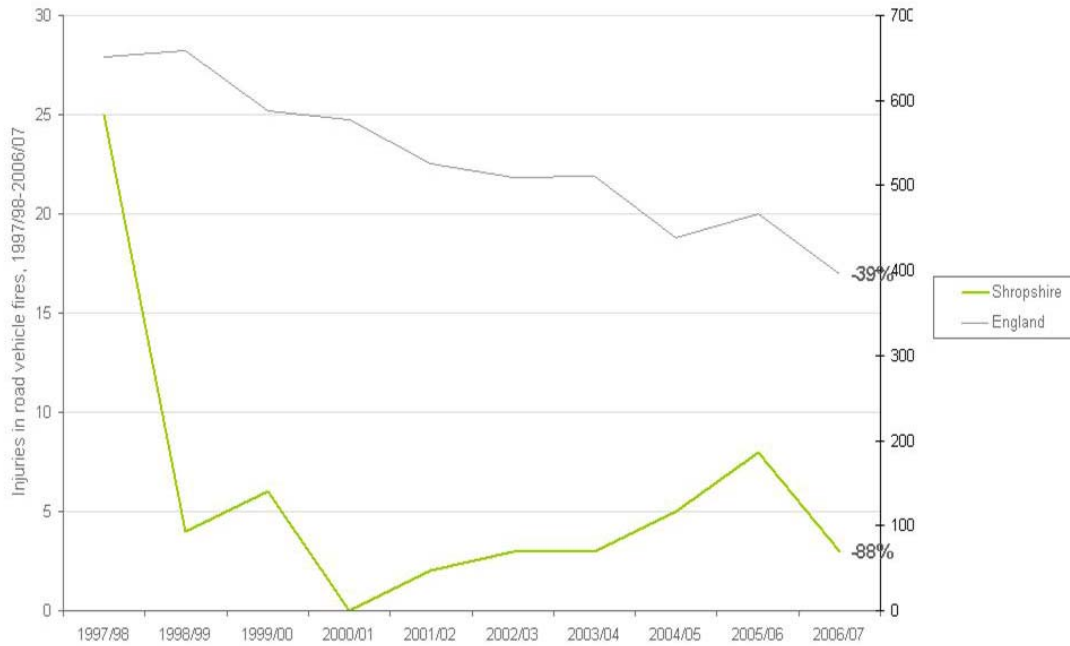
<b>Measure</b>	All injuries in primary fires, 1997/98-2006/07
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	<p>Shropshire's performance on this measure appears to be significantly better than that typically experienced across the rest of the country.</p> <p>Although some of this difference could be accounted for by the improvements Shropshire has made to its injury investigation processes, this cannot explain all of the difference.</p> <p>This trend is not explored in any of the other figures shown in main Audit Commission report.</p>
Shropshire's variation over the time period	56% reduction
National variation over the time period	27% reduction
Brigade Strength or Improvement	Strength
Action required	Share good practice in risk reduction initiatives.

Injuries in dwelling fires, 1997/98 – 2006/07



<b>Measure</b>	Injuries in dwelling fires, 1997/98-2006/07
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	<p>As with the previous graph, Shropshire's performance against this measure is significantly better than that typically experienced across the rest of the country. Again, the improvements Shropshire has made to the follow up investigation it carries out for all injuries, may account for some of this improvement, but cannot explain all of the difference seen here.</p> <p>With such a low number of injuries now arising in Shropshire each year, it would appear that performance may have reached a plateau.</p>
Shropshire's variation over the time period	45% reduction
National variation over the time period	26% reduction
Brigade Strength or Improvement	Strength
Action required	Share good practice in risk reduction initiatives.

Injuries in road vehicle fires, 1997/98 – 2006/07



<b>Measure</b>	Injuries in road vehicle fires, 1997/98-2006/07
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	<p>Following a significant reduction in the number of injuries sustained in vehicle fires, between 1997 and 1998, the number of these injuries in Shropshire is so low that it is inappropriate to compare it to the national trend.</p> <p>At this moment in time, the reason for such good performance in Shropshire is unclear</p>
Shropshire's variation over the time period	88% reduction
National variation over the time period	39% reduction
Brigade Strength or Improvement	Neither
Action required	Need to determine the reason for the reduction experienced between 1997 and 1998.

All deaths in primary, 1997/98 – 2006/07



<b>Measure</b>	All deaths in primary fires, 1997/98-2006/07
Are there any queries about data quality?	No
Brigade view on what the graph shows	<p>With such low numbers of fire deaths in Shropshire each year, resulting in significant variation from one year to the next, it is not appropriate to compare Shropshire's trend to that typically experienced across the rest of the country as a whole.</p> <p>Whilst this measure has some value for driving improvement across the country as a whole, this graph appears to support the view that fire deaths is not a very accurate performance measure at the level of an individual Brigade.</p>
Shropshire's variation over the time period	60% reduction
National variation over the time period	37% reduction
Brigade Strength or Improvement	Neither
Action required	No specific action identified.