| Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority | | | |
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| **Meeting of the:** | **Authority** | | |
| **Date:** | **29 October 2026** | **Report No:** | **CFO/16/2627** |
| **Presenting Officer** | **Chief Fire Officer, Nick Searle** | | |
| **Responsible Officer:** | **Area Manager, Chris Barrett** | **Report Author:** | **Group Manager, Danila Breathnacht** |
| **Officers Consulted:** | **Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), Scrutiny Committee** | | |
| **Title of Report:** | **Annual Health, Safety and Welfare Report 2025/26** | | |

| **Appendices:** | **Appendix A:** | **Annual Health, Safety and Welfare Report 2025/26** |
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## Purpose of Report

1. To present the Annual Health, Safety and Welfare Report 2025/26 to Members, providing assurance on Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service's health, safety and welfare performance, key achievements during the reporting period and priorities for 2026/27.

## Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members note the contents of the Annual Health, Safety and Welfare Report 2025/26

## Introduction and Background

3. The Annual Health, Safety and Welfare Report provides an overview of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service's ('the Service') health, safety and welfare performance for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 and summarises performance against the Service's Local Performance Indicators (LPIs), together with wider health, safety and welfare activity undertaken throughout the year. A copy of the report can be found in Appendix A of this report.

4. The Annual Health, Safety and Welfare Report provides Members with assurance that the Authority continues to meet its statutory duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, together with associated health and safety legislation, through effective governance, monitoring and continual improvement. The report also demonstrates the Service's commitment to protecting employees, contractors and members of the public through proactive risk management.

5. Performance is monitored through a suite of Local Performance Indicators covering workplace injuries, operational safety, road risk, welfare and organisational learning. These indicators are supported by established governance arrangements including the Health & Safety Committee, Workplace

Review Group and Road Risk Review Group, ensuring emerging trends are identified, organisational learning is embedded and continuous improvement is delivered across the Service.

1. During 2025/26 the Service attended 18,709 operational incidents, resulting in 99,628 appliance movements. During this period 45 operational staff injuries were recorded, an increase of seven on the previous year. However, 33 employees remained on duty following their injury, demonstrating that the majority of injuries were minor in nature. A total of 197 duty days were lost due to operational injuries, representing a reduction of 37 days compared with the previous year. Operational injuries sustained at incidents remained significantly below the Service Plan Target, with 15 injuries recorded against a target of 21.

2. The Service continued to invest significantly in operational competence and firefighter safety throughout the reporting period. Following the opening of the Training and Development Academy, 264 core operational training courses were delivered, representing a 61% increase on the previous year. This was complemented by 72 EN1 exercises, 37 multi-agency exercises, 19 Tactical Command Assessments, 283 National Resilience training events, six cross-border exercises and the successful recruitment of 28 Apprentice Firefighters, demonstrating the Service's continued commitment to maintaining operational competence and preparedness.

3. The report demonstrates the continued maturity of the Service's positive health and safety culture. During the year 149 Near Miss reports were submitted, providing evidence of continued staff engagement with organisational learning and a positive reporting culture. Alongside this, the Health & Safety Team completed an extensive programme of audits, inspections, policy reviews and assurance activity to ensure compliance with statutory obligations and identify opportunities for continuous improvement.

4. Employee welfare remained a significant strength throughout the year. The Occupational Health and Wellbeing Team completed 1,723 Occupational Health appointments, supported 496 physiotherapy referrals, undertook 493 fitness assessments, managed 90 Critical Incidents, facilitated 155 Critical Incident Stress Management defusing sessions and delivered 740 counselling sessions, providing comprehensive support to employees' physical and psychological wellbeing.

5. Road Risk and firefighter safety continue to be key priorities. During 2025/26 there were 79 Service vehicle road traffic collisions, all of which were reviewed through the Road Risk Review Group to identify contributory factors, organisational learning and appropriate interventions. The report also highlights significant progress in reducing firefighter exposure to contaminants through the implementation of Service Instructions, enhanced station assurance, COSHH risk assessments and regional collaboration.

6. While the overall Health, Safety and Welfare position for 2025/26 remains positive, the annual review has identified areas where further improvement is required. In particular, road risk remains a key area of focus, with 79 collisions

involving Service vehicles recorded during the year, an increase of 19 compared with the previous reporting period. Routine appliance collisions increased to 38, with the predominant theme involving low-speed forward movements, while collisions during emergency response also increased, albeit with generally lower severity than the previous year.

7. In response to the year-on-year increase in Service vehicle collisions, we will strengthen evidence-led road risk interventions by holding rotational Road Risk Review meetings at Community Fire Stations, prioritising those with the highest collision rates. These sessions will examine collision data and costs, identify root causes, share organisational learning and encourage crew-led improvements to safer driving practices. Targeted seasonal road safety guidance will also be issued each September to raise awareness of changing weather, reduced daylight and other seasonal hazards, particularly following the eight routine activity incidents recorded in October.

8. During 2026/27, these areas will be addressed through a continued emphasis on evidence-led prevention, assurance and organisational learning. Collision data and emerging themes will continue to be scrutinised through the Road Risk Review Group, supported by targeted driver development, communications, case studies and learning interventions. Importantly, the Service will also explore opportunities to better utilise advances in vehicle technology on operational appliances, including driver-assistance and collision-avoidance technologies where appropriate, with the aim of reducing low-speed manoeuvring incidents and preventable appliance collisions. This will complement existing work around vehicle conspicuity, driver training and learning from incidents, ensuring that technological solutions form part of a wider, proportionate approach to reducing occupational road risk. More broadly, the development of the Health & Safety Strategy and replacement Health & Safety management system will provide further opportunities to strengthen assurance, improve the use of data and target interventions against areas of greatest organisational risk.

9. Looking ahead to 2026/27, the Health & Safety Team will continue to deliver improvements through procurement of a replacement Health & Safety Management System to replace OSHENS, development of the Service's first Health & Safety Strategy, continued reduction of operational road risk, further contaminant reduction initiatives and the development of additional COSHH risk assessments covering emerging operational risks, including lithium-ion battery fires, diesel exhaust emissions, asbestos and water rescue activities. These priorities directly support the Operational Response Functional Plan and the Service's commitment to continuous improvement.

10. Members of the Scrutiny Committee scrutinised the report on the 15th October 2026 as part of its Scrutiny Forward Work Plan. Members of the Scrutiny Committee noted in particular the positive progress of the Service and the welfare provisions offered to staff.

## Equality and Diversity Implications

11. The 2025/26 Health, Safety and Welfare (HSAW) report has no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications and does not require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). However, individual matters covered within the report may require an EIA. Where required, these will be completed at the outset and reviewed as proposals develop.

## Staff Implications

12. The report demonstrates the continued commitment of the Service to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees through effective governance, training, operational assurance, welfare support and continuous organisational learning. The proposed priorities for 2026/27 will further strengthen these arrangements and support the continued development of a positive safety culture.

## Legal Implications

13. The report provides assurance that the Authority continues to meet its statutory obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, RIDDOR and associated health and safety legislation through appropriate governance, monitoring and assurance arrangements.

## Financial Implications & Value for Money

14. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any future expenditure associated with the replacement Health & Safety Management System or other improvement initiatives will be subject to existing budgetary controls, governance arrangements and approval processes.

## Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

15. Effective management of health and safety remains fundamental to protecting employees, maintaining operational capability and ensuring compliance with statutory duties. The report demonstrates that robust governance, assurance and organisational learning arrangements remain in place to identify emerging risks, implement appropriate control measures and drive continuous improvement across the Service.

## Environmental Implications

16. There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report.

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| **Contribution to Our Vision:** | ***To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK.*** |
| Our Purpose: | *Here to serve, Here to protect, Here to keep you safe.* |

17. The Annual Health, Safety and Welfare Report demonstrates the Service's continued commitment to protecting employees, improving operational performance and embedding a positive health and safety culture. The work undertaken during 2025/26 supports operational resilience, organisational learning and firefighter safety whilst contributing directly to the Operational Response Functional Plan and the Authority's strategic vision.

## Background Papers

**NONE**

## Glossary Of Terms

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| **MFRS** | **M**erseyside **F**ire and **R**escue **S**ervice |
| **EIA** | **E**quality **I**mpact **A**ssessment |
| **LPI** | **L**ocal **P**erformance **I**ndicator |