

# Annual report 2023-24

## Community Safety Services

Protecting our community,  
reducing harm and saving lives.



OXFORDSHIRE  
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE



OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL



## Welcome and foreword

Welcome to Oxfordshire Community Safety Services' annual report, highlighting our performance and achievements from April 2023 to March 2024. This report covers the **fire and rescue** service, **emergency planning**, **road safety** and the **trading standards** services.

Throughout 2023/24, we continued to protect our communities, reduce harm and save lives with community focused, forward thinking; trusted, inclusive and sustainable services.

Our vision, as part of Oxfordshire County Council, is for a greener, fairer and healthier county and our work this year has focused on working with communities and ensuring an inclusive approach to all we do.

This year, another inspection from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) [rated our performance](#) as being adequate in some areas and requiring improvement in others. This judges how effectively and efficiently the service prevents and protects the public against fires and how well it looks after staff.

We welcome this feedback on the fire and rescue service and have committed to continuing to develop and improve all aspects of the community safety service we offer to Oxfordshire's residents. More details on how we plan to do this can be found on page 6.

Thank you for taking the time to read the report.

**Rob MacDougall**  
Chief Fire Officer and  
Director for Community Safety

**Cllr Dr Nathan Ley**





## 2 The service and the county

Size of the county:

**1,006  
miles<sup>2</sup>**



Population:

**738,280**

Appliances:

**34**

(excluding specialist  
vehicles to support  
operations)

Support staff:

**83**

(as at 4 June 2024)

Firefighters:

**559**

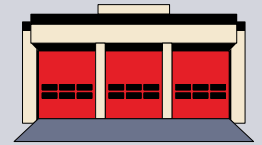
(wholetime including  
secondes 236, on-call 323)



Stations:

**25**

=



**19 on-call**

these stations are fully on-call  
and firefighters respond from  
their home or work

+

**3 wholetime  
and on-call**

these stations are crewed  
24/7 by both wholetime and  
on-call firefighters

+

**3 day crewed  
and on-call**

wholetime crew during the  
day with an on-call appliance  
as well and with a mixture  
of on-call and wholetime  
response at night

## 3 Emergency response

Our firefighters attended over **6,400** incidents  
(data and analysis as per 2023/24 report)

**1,172** fires  
(18 per cent of total incidents)



**153** incidents  
involving flooding  
– decline of 23 incidents (13 per  
cent decrease) from 2022/23



**64**  
animal rescues



**122**  
incidents  
where we  
assisted other  
agencies



**54** rescues from water



**3,400**  
false alarms  
(53 per cent  
of total incidents)



**445**  
road traffic  
collisions  
(7 per cent of  
total incidents)

**62**  
incidents involving  
hazardous materials







## Highlights of 2023/24 in figures

**449**

**fire safety audits**

completed in commercial premises by our fire safety team

**2,488**

**safe and well visits**

completed, ensuring our residents receive essential safety advice and help reduce risk in the home

**£194,000**

**saved or recovered**

for victims of doorstep crime, scams and other forms of financial abuse

**130**

**businesses visited**

in our fire safety week, delivering preventative fire safety advice in person by specially trained fire crews

**18**

**road traffic enforcement**

prosecutions by our trading standards department, resulting in fines and costs of £19,322

**22%**

**reduction**

(-329) in primary and non-primary fires attended from the previous year

**769**

**electric blankets tested**

with a failure rate of 36 per cent, protecting residents from the risk of fire

**46,386**

**miles driven**

in our electric fleet, reducing our environmental impact

**26%**

**increase**

(6,124) in children taking part in 7-11 year olds learning how to ride a bicycle safely on our cycle training programme

# 5 Areas of improvement

We have identified **three areas of improvement**, acknowledging they require long term objectives and programmes to establish lasting improvement.



## 1. On-call availability

Levels have not improved this year. We recruited **25 fewer** on-call firefighters this year compared to last.



### Action

- We recently launched our new inclusive recruitment campaign and will evaluate the success of this.
- We are also working to reduce our turnover rate from 14.7 per cent (15.4 per cent) in 2022/23 previous year.

## 2. Unwanted fire signals

Continue to rise, and this is common to many fire and rescue services. It relates to false alarms from automatic fire alarm activations.



### Action

- We publicly consulted on new policy arrangements to reduce the burden of these calls. The changes were implemented during 2024.
- Our fire protection department continue to proactively educate business owners about how to manage these alarms themselves, preventing the need for call outs.





### 3. Response times

Between 2023/24 we responded to **70 per cent** of incidents within **11 minutes**.

This was a decrease of **two percentage points** from the previous year and below our performance target of **80 per cent**.

Response standards for attendance within **14 minutes** remained similar to 2022/23 at **84 per cent**.

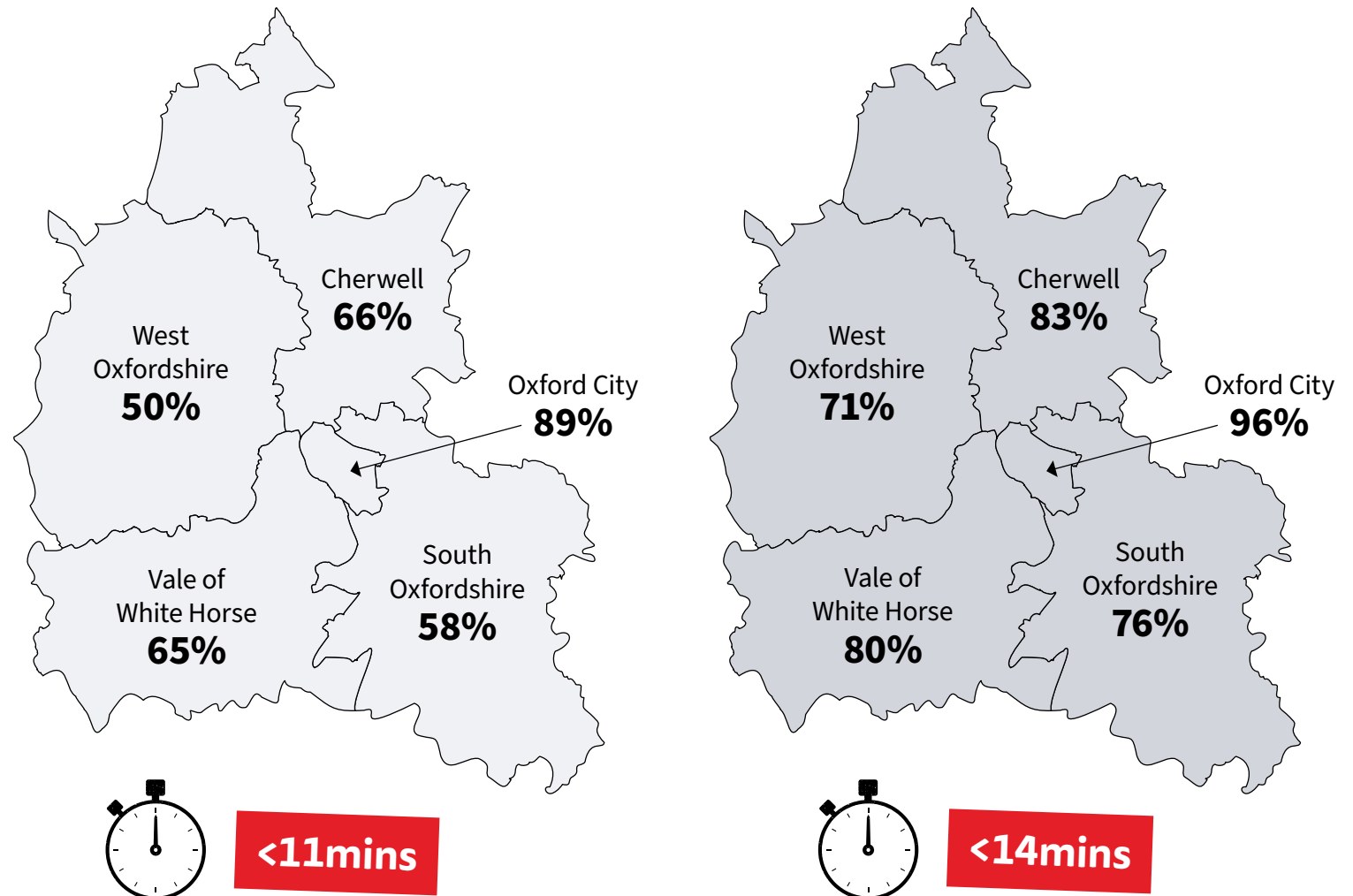


#### Action

- We are exploring links between the reduction of on-call availability and the impact this has on our response times.



### Oxfordshire response standards





## 6 New initiatives

### Community safety review

We are implementing **five internal improvements**, with a new operational response model pending risk modelling and public consultation to enhance service response times and resilience in Oxfordshire.

### Fleet review

The Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue **fleet strategy** was rolled out in November 2023. This strategy ensures that fire appliances and associated vehicles are replaced on a schedule that prevents them from breaching recommended lifespan periods.

### Cultural review work

As an organisation we are working towards being an employer of choice. With **external input** capturing the views of our team, we can continue to build on the positives and enablers and focus on improving in areas that have been fed back as barriers or concerns.

### HMICFRS action plan

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspected Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue in January 2024. The inspectors gathered documents and data and carried out a survey of staff prior to the inspection.

Their [report](#) has been published and has highlighted the following:

- From the **11 criteria** that are scored, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service received an **adequate** grade **in seven areas** and **requires improvement in four**.
- Within the report the inspectors have suggested **26 areas** where the service could improve.



**We take the report as a great opportunity. An action plan will be established to drive activity around these 26 areas.**

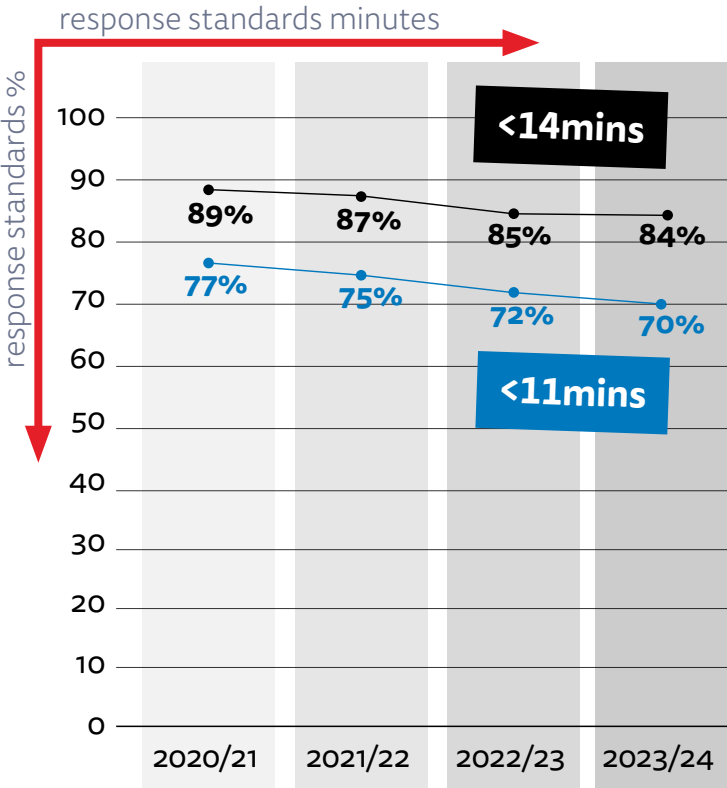


# 7 Response

## Response standards

Our core function is to respond effectively to emergency incidents. This response service is provided from **25 fire stations** across the county.

**80 per cent** of attendances should be achieved within 11 minutes, and 95 per cent within 14 minutes of a call.



Nationally, there has been an increase of **23 seconds** compared with previous years. The average response time year ending March 2023 was 9 minutes and 13 seconds.

Our average response time during 2023/24 was **9 minutes and 2 seconds**.

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
08:36	08:40	09:00	09:02

**Six fire stations** are crewed by wholetime personnel. Three of these provide 24-hour cover. The other three provide cover in the day and an on-call service at night.

All **25 fire stations** have an on-call crew and **19 fire stations** are crewed only by on-call personnel. These stations provide an emergency response to our communities.

Figure: Response standards across Oxfordshire 2020-2024

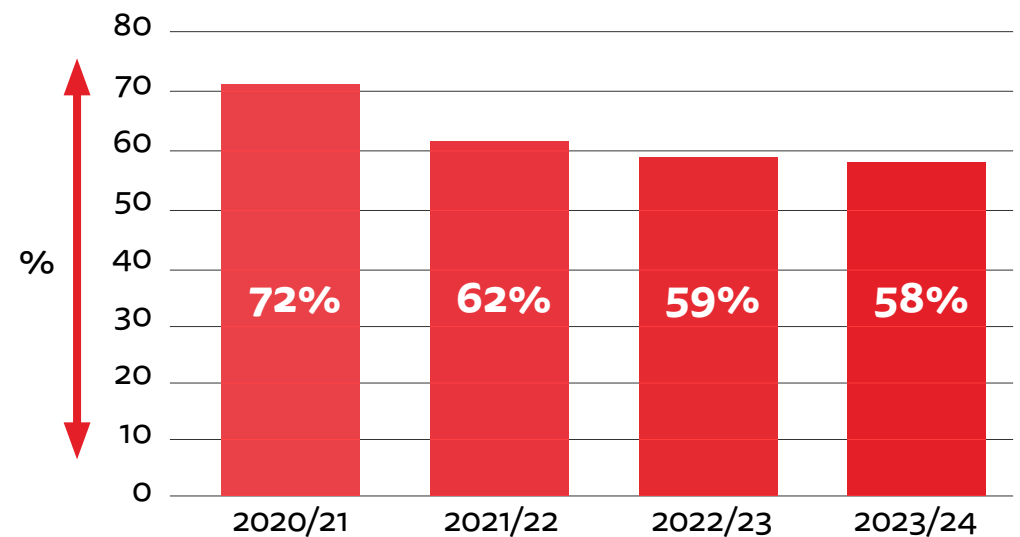


## On-call availability

We aspire to provide 100 per cent availability at all on-call fire stations.

On-call availability across Oxfordshire for 2023/24 was 58 per cent – a decrease compared with the previous year's figure which was 59 per cent.

There are many factors which impact on-call availability including recruitment, retention, contracts, cover from fulltime (wholetime crews and operational day duties staff).



**Figure:** On-call availability across Oxfordshire by year



8

Prevention

**Focusing our resources on the most vulnerable, working with our partners to protect our communities**

Safe and well

Safe and well visits are done by our specialist home and community safety advisers and operational crews.

They work to reduce the likelihood of fires starting in the home through advice and simple interventions. We also ensure residents can respond effectively if required, by installing fire detection or referring to partner agencies for further support.

This year, the prevention department joined forces with the data systems team and the newly appointed data analyst to produce risk profiles for the station areas.

The profiles are created by combining historical incident data with demographics and lifestyle factors, a methodology that allows for areas to be mapped according to risk.

This is an evidence-led approach, enabling frontline staff to focus their efforts and reduce the risk to those most likely to have a fire in the home. The profiles have been combined with community insights data to ensure that our teams are better equipped with the knowledge and understanding of their residents and local communities.

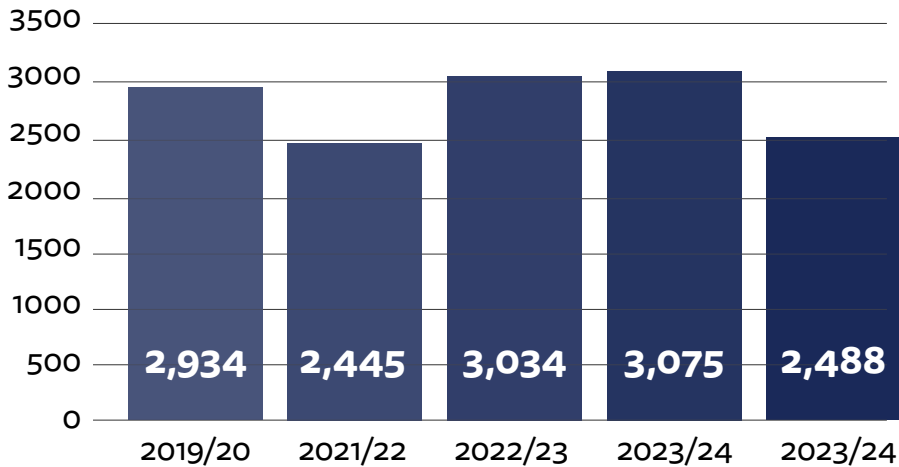


Figure: Safe and well visits 2019-2024 by financial year

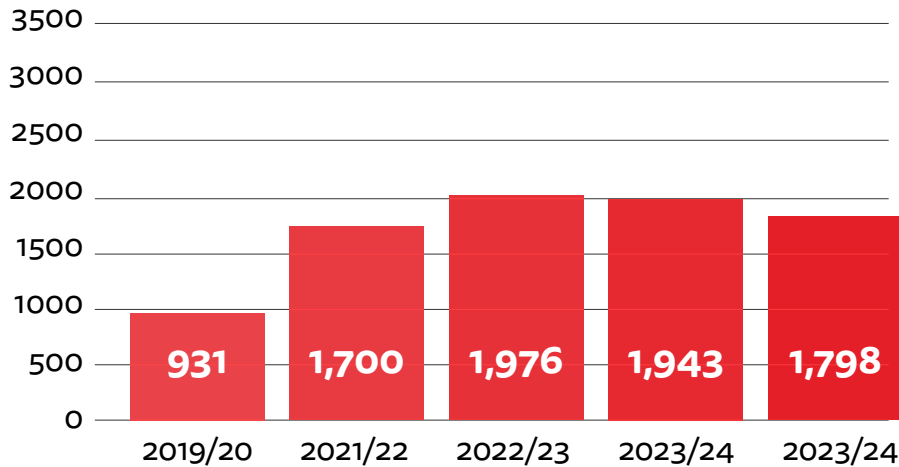


Figure: Referrals from partner agencies to Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue

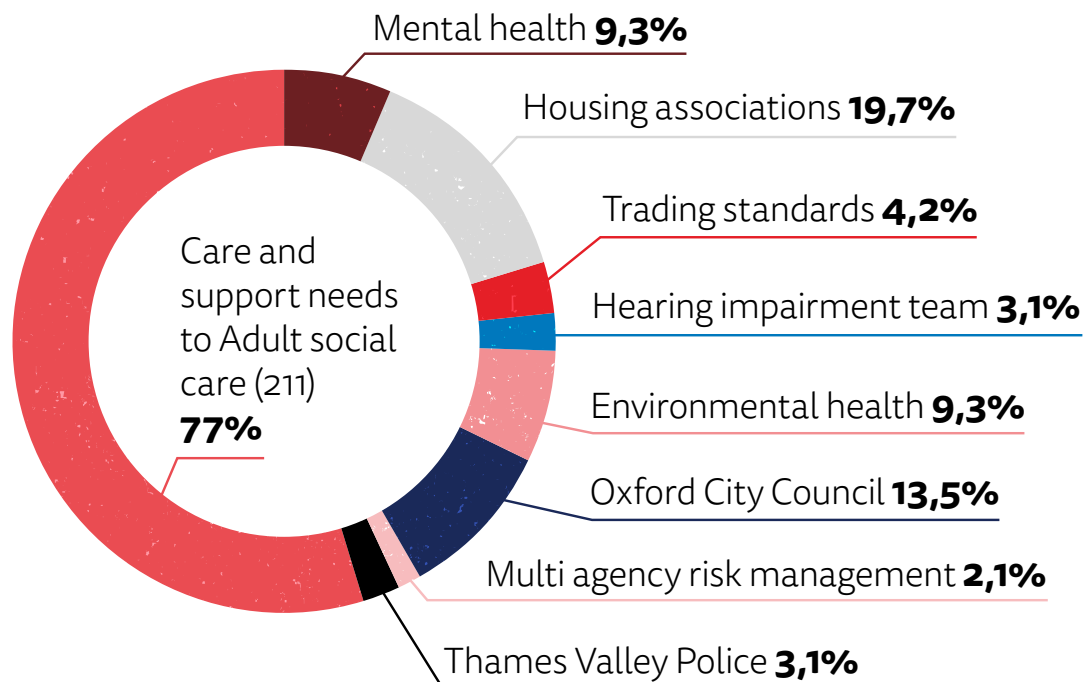
## Safeguarding concerns and referrals

**Overall reported numbers are increasing year on year. This means we are helping more vulnerable residents receive the support they need from the right agency.**

In the annual safeguarding children's and adult's audit, commissioned by both the adult and children's safeguarding boards, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service ranked **green**, a positive result across all the required sectors of the audit.

An example of this was in May 2023, when fire crews raised a safeguarding concern following their response to a smoke alarm activation in a home in Banbury. The property was found to be severely hoarded with a resident who was struggling to cope following the loss of his wife.

A multi-agency approach was taken to ensure the right support was put in place to improve conditions in the property. Fire crews returned and visited all neighbours to ensure that advice was provided and sufficient steps were taken to reduce the risk from fire.



**Figure:** Referrals from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service to other agencies



Cycle training and road safety education

Over 6,000 children have taken part in our cycle training programme. It works to teach every 7-11 year old child to ride a bicycle safely over a two year period.

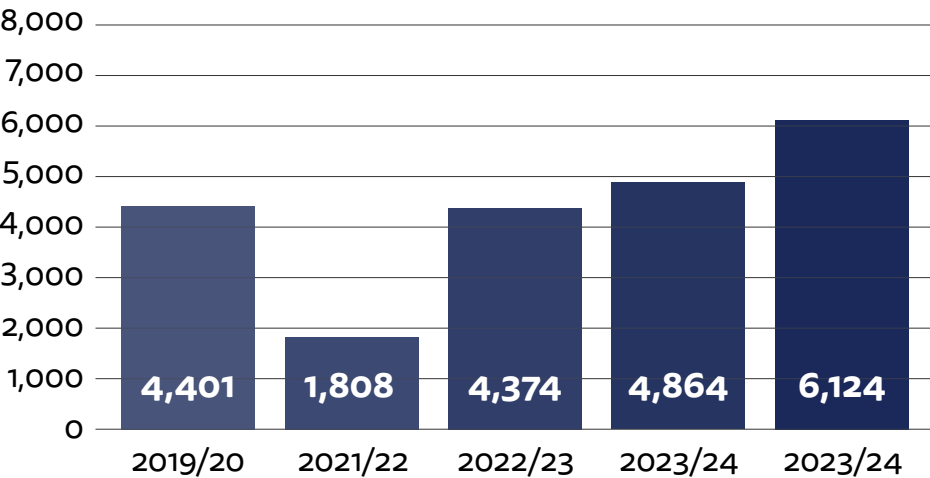


Figure: Number of children taking part in our cycle training programme



Bikeability funding was **increased by £150k**. We have also received an **additional £8.5k** to fund a project for school engagement to increase the take up of cycle training.

We continued to support the **Bike Library programme** by working with Active Oxfordshire to set up a bike library and use fire stations to collect donated bicycles for Oxfordshire families who could not afford them previously.

We have introduced **adult rider confidence** session for adults and will continue to look at options such as directly delivering into the universities.

All aspects of road safety education are targeted to those most at risk, and we work with partner agencies to ensure our road safety campaigns are combined and consistent.

In 2023, the **Vision Zero project** group was established which brings together a collaborative approach to reducing road deaths and serious injuries.

## Fire investigation

We are working with our Thames Valley fire and rescue partners and Thames Valley Police to enhance our fire investigation capability. This will help us meet planned national standards when supporting criminal prosecutions taken by the Crown Prosecution Service.

This capability will deliver a range of benefits including improvements in our prevention services, improved crime detection levels and a value for money solution for Thames Valley Police. We are also aligning the fire investigation teams and training across the Thames Valley to maximise the opportunities available and improve resilience.

## Social media engagement

**We continue to share prevention messages on our social media accounts – ensuring we reach a diverse range and number of people across our communities.**

### Facebook

**20,000**  
followers

**2,219** posts

**64,180**  
engagement  
(clicks, likes, shares,  
comments))

A reach of over  
**8 million** people

### Instagram

**1,930**  
followers

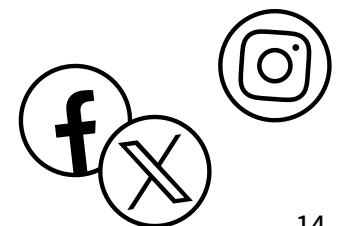
**737 people**  
reached  
on average, per day

**329,570**  
impressions  
from content on our  
Instagram page

X

**10,490**  
followers

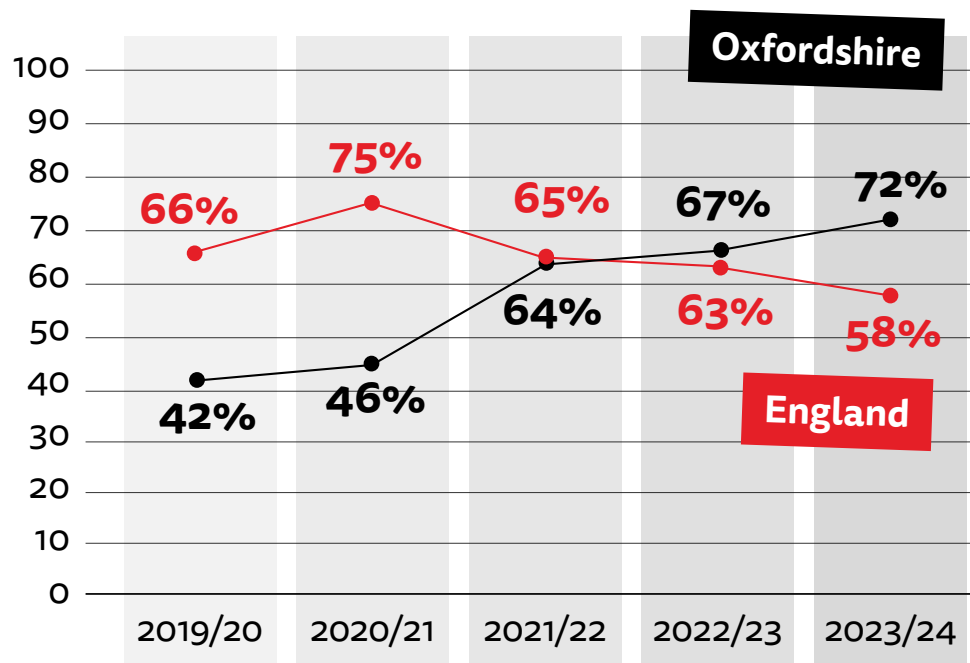
**583** posts  
reaching  
295,520 people



# 9 Protection

## Targeting the most vulnerable people and businesses in our built environment

The fire protection department has been proactive in targeting our highest risk premises, through known premises on our risk-based inspection program (RBIP), themed audits and complaints/referrals.



**Figure:** Percentage of 'satisfactory' fire safety audits in Oxfordshire against England 2019-2023

**449 audits** were completed this year, **325** (72 per cent) of these were satisfactory. This is better than the [England average](#) of **58 per cent**.

With the recruitment of **five** new safety officers, we continue to make Oxfordshire safer for both residents and visitors to the county.

Our building control team completed **694 formal fire safety building regulation consultations**. This has ensured that new premises being constructed in the county meet rigorous safety standard.

We have completed multiple business engagement campaigns. This included a successful campaign focused on bed and breakfasts across the county which resulted in an increased level of compliance against the fire safety regulations.

Our digital presence has also increased across multiple social media platforms with a monthly fire safety e-letter being sent to our subscribers.





## 10 Trading Standards

- Saved or recovered **£194,000** for victims of doorstep crime, scams and other forms of financial abuse (including responding to 44 incidents of doorstep crime).
- Reached **3,478** people with preventative advice and support.
- Inspectors of weights and measures tested and verified over **700** items of weighing and measuring equipment.
- Safety tested **769** electric blankets of which **273** failed the test – a 36 per cent failure rate.
- With support from public health, we restricted children's access to vapes, visiting **34** retailers and seizing over **4,600** non-compliant devices.
- Fitted **206** call blockers, leading to **194,879** calls being blocked. Estimated savings to residents, police, social care and the NHS was **£2,930,294**.
- Recruited over **150** friends against scams ([friendsagainstsams.org.uk](https://www.friendsagainstsams.org.uk)) who help to raise awareness throughout their community.
- Conducted **1,790** interventions with Oxfordshire businesses, providing advice and support, testing products and procedures.
- Investigated hundreds of reports regarding HGVs inappropriately using weight-restricted roads and bridges, leading to **18** prosecutions.

## 11 Joint Oxfordshire Resilience Team

**The Joint Oxfordshire Resilience Team (formerly Emergency Planning) helps Oxfordshire County Council to meet the statutory duties to have robust emergency plans and business continuity arrangements and promote resilience within communities and businesses.**

**Community resilience:** The team has statutory duties to help communities prepare for emergencies, assist with business continuity, and have processes to warn, inform and support the public in emergencies.

The team supported **42 events** and distributed **1,557 community resilience bags** to make vulnerable households more resilient. **622 businesses** were provided with business continuity information.





## Learning and improvement

### Fire and Rescue service incidents and training

**Learning from past incidents to prevent future ones is crucial for the health, safety, and wellbeing of Oxfordshire fire and rescue service workers. We take every opportunity to learn both from ourselves and others.**

We monitor incidents, crews, training and exercises, and use systems to examine skills, techniques, procedures and our interactions with others. After incidents or training events we provide an opportunity for staff to discuss what went well, what didn't go well, and how improvements can be made. These are then processed to understand if we can action improvements and share learning both internally and with others.

- The purchase of new ratchet tools to assist with rescuing people from cars (this followed feedback and trial using the equipment by station personnel).
- The purchase of different bags to keep Road Traffic Collision gear in a safe and effective manner as previous containers were breaking easily.

- The planned rollout of 'Highrise boards' to assist with recording of information to assist the searching of Highrise buildings during an incident.
- The use of thermal imaging cameras by officers in charge to assess buildings and situations before committing crews.

### Learning from national events

In response to the 2017 Grenfell tragedy, we are collaborating with Thames Valley Fire and Rescue service partners on an action plan to enhance our prevention, mitigation, and response capabilities, including operational procedures, communications, call handling, incident command, and training.

In response to a 2019 firefighter fatality during water rescue training, a working group is reviewing and aligning equipment, procedures, and risk assessments for boat and water operations with National Fire Chiefs Council national best practices.



# 13 Awards

- Firefighter and LGBT+ champion **Charlotte Stacey** was awarded a **British Empire Medal** for her services to the community.

## British Empire Medal



**Charlotte Stacey**

## British Empire Medal (BEM)

Achievement or contribution of a very “hands-on” service to the community in a local geographical area.

This might take the form of sustained commitment in support of very local charitable and/or voluntary activity; or innovative work that has delivered real impact but that is relatively short (three to four years) in duration.

Presentations of BEMs are made locally.

- **Peter Savage** was the recipient of the **Rose Award**.

## Rose Award



**Peter Savage**

## Rose Award

Presented in memory of Cllr Rodney Rose, who was cabinet member for Community safety Services and Deputy Leader of the county council.

This is awarded to an employee who has made an outstanding contribution to supporting Oxfordshire communities and has consistently demonstrated qualities of compassion, proves an unyielding dedication to community service and to improving the lives of others in Oxfordshire.