



January 2026

- Firefighters are an irreplaceable public service, all day and night, all year round.
- Firefighters provide UK-wide resilience to a wide range of emergencies, from fires to floods, road traffic incidents to marauding terrorism, and much else.
- In the 14 years of Conservative-led governments at Westminster, one-in-five (20%) of firefighter jobs across the UK were cut.
- In the first year of the Labour government at Westminster (2024-25), a further one hundred jobs were cut.
- The FBU is campaigning for sustained investment from central government in our fire and rescue service.
- **The FBU is warning politicians: Cuts Kill.**

First year cuts

Firefighter jobs continue to be cut, despite promises made by the Westminster government to implement change.

Official figures analysed by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) reveal the continued erosion of our life-saving fire and rescue service. Last year (2024-25), another hundred firefighter jobs were cut across the UK. England lost 169 firefighters, while Wales gained 70.

There were significant losses of more than 4% in Warwickshire, Cheshire, East Sussex, Norfolk, North West Fire Control and Oxfordshire. The FBU believes **there are currently too few firefighters to guarantee UK-wide resilience.**

Historic cuts

Official figures reveal the full impact of austerity caused by 14 years of Conservative-led governments. Between 2010 and 2024, the fire and rescue service lost nearly 12,000 jobs – a fifth (20%) or one-in-five firefighters.

Between 2010 and 2024, more than 8,000 wholetime firefighters were cut, as well as more than 3,000 retained firefighter posts. Almost a quarter of control staff, were lost.

England was the worst impacted of the four administrations, with almost 10,000 jobs cut. In Scotland 1,356 were lost, an 18% decrease. In Wales, 419 posts were cut, around 11%. In Northern Ireland, 224 jobs were lost, 11% of the previous total. **The hardest hit were West Yorkshire, Buckinghamshire, Nottinghamshire, Tyne and Wear, Staffordshire, Cleveland and Greater Manchester.**

Cuts Kill

Fire and rescue services are labour-intensive – **firefighters are irreplaceable** on the fire ground. Three-quarters of fire budgets are spent on firefighters. Therefore **any cuts to funding inevitably impact on the number of firefighters employed.**

Chief fire officers, organised through the NFCC and its predecessor CFOA, implemented these job cuts with very little protest. When asked by MPs and select committees about the consequences of cuts, they mostly equivocated. Over the last year, the NFCC seems to have woken up to the damage of past and continuing cuts. **But fine words are not enough.** Fire employers and chief fire officers need to get behind the FBU's campaign 'Cuts Kill' and add their weight to calls for sustained investment.

Data

Headcount, 31 March each year. Wholetime + retained + control = firefighters. MHCLG, FIRE 1101; Scottish Government, Operational Statistics; Welsh Government, Personnel (headcount) by employment type; NIFRS Freedom of Information

The official figures do not reveal the scale of "wholetime-retained" contracts across the fire and rescue service.

Last year, the FBU estimated that at least 4,000 firefighters have a wholetime (full-time) contract and another retained (part-time) contract – either with the same brigade or another service.

While "wholetime-retained" contracts have helped individual firefighters deal with pay cuts over the last decade, for the service it means they may be counted as two jobs.



Fire and rescue service	2010	2024	Change	%		2024	2025	Change	%
Scotland	7,712	6,356	-1,356	-18%		6,356	6,366	10	0.2%
Northern Ireland	1,994	1,770	-224	-11%		1,770	1,756	-14	-0.8%
Mid and West Wales	1,196	1,116	-80	-7%		1,116	1,143	27	2.4%
North Wales	883	767	-116	-13%		767	801	34	4.4%
South Wales	1,666	1,443	-223	-13%		1,443	1,452	9	0.6%
Cleveland	629	442	-187	-30%		442	436	-6	-1.4%
Durham	579	512	-67	-12%		512	496	-16	-3.1%
Northumberland	430	332	-98	-23%		332	336	4	1.2%
Tyne and Wear	940	637	-303	-32%		637	620	-17	-2.7%
Humberside	1,053	815	-238	-23%		815	811	-4	-0.5%
North Yorkshire	773	635	-138	-18%		635	629	-6	-0.9%
South Yorkshire	936	748	-188	-20%		748	747	-1	-0.1%
West Yorkshire	1,720	1,103	-617	-36%		1,103	1,132	29	2.6%
Cheshire	746	659	-87	-12%		659	619	-40	-6.1%
Cumbria	738	583	-155	-21%		583	579	-4	-0.7%
Greater Manchester	1,992	1,403	-589	-30%		1,403	1,422	19	1.4%
Lancashire	1,336	1,075	-261	-20%		1,075	1,064	-11	-1.0%
Merseyside	1,204	993	-211	-18%		993	975	-18	-1.8%
North West Fire Control	0	67	67			67	64	-3	-4.5%
Derbyshire	779	734	-45	-6%		734	726	-8	-1.1%
Leicestershire	796	624	-172	-22%		624	655	31	5.0%
Lincolnshire	757	613	-144	-19%		613	616	3	0.5%
Northamptonshire	575	464	-111	-19%		464	466	2	0.4%
Nottinghamshire	973	658	-315	-32%		658	661	3	0.5%
Hereford and Worcester	723	620	-103	-14%		620	601	-19	-3.1%
Shropshire	573	484	-89	-16%		484	494	10	2.1%
Staffordshire	930	651	-279	-30%		651	677	26	4.0%
Warwickshire	457	429	-28	-6%		429	395	-34	-7.9%
West Midlands	1,933	1,417	-516	-27%		1,417	1,444	27	1.9%
Bedfordshire	499	457	-42	-8%		457	462	5	1.1%
Cambridgeshire	695	530	-165	-24%		530	533	3	0.6%
Essex	1,415	1,176	-239	-17%		1,176	1,177	1	0.1%
Hertfordshire	842	725	-117	-14%		725	700	-25	-3.4%
Norfolk	861	816	-45	-5%		816	776	-40	-4.9%
Suffolk	782	600	-182	-23%		600	602	2	0.3%
London	6,018	4,737	-1,281	-21%		4,737	4,815	78	1.6%
East Sussex	734	552	-182	-25%		552	519	-33	-6.0%
Kent	1,663	1,185	-478	-29%		1,185	1,171	-14	-1.2%
Surrey	753	621	-132	-18%		621	605	-16	-2.6%
West Sussex	825	626	-199	-24%		626	608	-18	-2.9%
Berkshire	579	465	-114	-20%		465	483	18	3.9%
Buckinghamshire	625	412	-213	-34%		412	435	23	5.6%
Hampshire and IoW	1,837	1,441	-396	-22%		1,441	1,401	-40	-2.8%
Oxfordshire	652	563	-89	-14%		563	540	-23	-4.1%
Avon	970	726	-244	-25%		726	716	-10	-1.4%
Cornwall	647	576	-71	-11%		576	607	31	5.4%
Devon and Somerset	2,058	1,683	-375	-18%		1,683	1,646	-37	-2.2%
Dorset and Wiltshire	1,297	1,007	-290	-22%		1,007	981	-26	-2.6%
Gloucestershire	523	456	-67	-13%		456	443	-13	-2.9%
Isles of Scilly	51	42	-9	-18%		42	40	-2	-4.8%
UK	59,349	47,546	-11,803	-20%		47,546	47,443	-103	-0.2%

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The Fire Brigades Union is the professional voice of firefighters in the UK.

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