



FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE MATTERS

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Government in England continue to cut the fire and rescue service

The Westminster government continues to cut the fire and rescue service, despite the approaching two year anniversary of the Grenfell Tower Fire, and a rise in incidents and rescues. Have lessons still not been learned?

On 29 January 2019, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) confirmed its Local Government Settlement, providing the final figures for the central funding allocated to fire authorities in England.

Figures show that the Westminster government has cut central grant funding, known as the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA), to fire authorities by **15% overall** over the years 2016-17 to 2019-20.

Westminster provided over a **billion pounds** to fire and rescue services in England in 2016-17. This has since been cut by **£155 million**. Over the five year period, the cuts amount to **15%**. The level of cuts planned for various fire authorities in England is set out in the table overleaf.

CENTRAL CUTS

The period between 2010 and 2015 saw 30% central funding reductions. These cuts were highlighted in the National Audit Office report on the financial sustainability of fire and rescue service (*Financial sustainability of fire and rescue services – NAO, 2015*).

In 2016-17, the government spent £1,013m on fire. But in 2019-20, it will only spend **£858m** (see overleaf).

The government has continuously attacked the service. Fire authorities have been the hardest hit in the last few years, closely followed by combined fire authorities. These cuts are evidence that austerity is not over for the fire and rescue service.

The 2-year-anniversary of Grenfell Tower fire will take place this June. It would appear that, despite endless empty promises, Westminster has not learned their lesson. The fire and rescue service has not been protected.

INCIDENTS, FIRES & FATALITIES

Home Office figures for England (March 2017 to March 2018) reveal:

- **1% increase** in overall incidents attended by firefighters (564,827 incidents)
- **3% increase** in fire incidents attended by firefighters (167,000 fires)
- **27% increase** in fire related fatalities (334 deaths - includes fatalities at Grenfell Tower)
- **4% increase** in the number of rescues made by firefighters (45,000 people rescued - more than 100 rescues every day)

The government continues to cut its funding, while firefighters across the UK make more rescues and attend more overall incidents.

Home Office figures for England (March 2018 – 19) may show a drop in fire fatalities (as Grenfell Tower data will not be included). But this decrease should not be used as justification for further cuts. It would be the result of impressive firefighting efforts and effective public safety campaigns. Without investment, we may see even higher fatality figures in future.

MORE CUTS

Fire authorities are funded centrally, but they are also funded by revenue raised locally through council tax. This money, together with the SFA, is known as core spending power.

The changes introduced by the Westminster government allows local authorities to keep more revenue raised locally and this change affects the most recent funding allocation. The situation for the fire and rescue service is worsened by simultaneous cuts to both local and central funding streams.

All fire authorities are facing central funding cuts and most will not be able to make up the shortfall with locally-raised revenue or their reserves. We know that various fire and rescue services in England are affected. Figures specific to fire funding for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not available.

Final Local Government Settlement Fire authorities in England (2016-17 to 2019-20)

Fire authority	SFA Fire 2016-17 (£m)	SFA Fire 2019-20 (£m)	Cut SFA 2016-17 to 2019-20 (£m)	Cut SFA 2016-17 to 2019-20 (%)
Avon	£18.6	£15.8	-£2.9	-15%
Bedfordshire	£10.2	£8.1	-£2.1	-20%
Berkshire	£12.4	£10.2	-£2.2	-18%
Buckinghamshire	£9.1	£7.3	-£1.8	-19%
Cambridgeshire	£10.7	£8.8	-£1.9	-18%
Cheshire	£16.0	£13.2	-£2.8	-17%
Cleveland	£16.3	£14.5	-£1.8	-11%
Cornwall	£13.4	£11.3	-£2.1	-16%
Cumbria	£9.9	£8.2	-£1.6	-17%
Derbyshire	£15.5	£13.0	-£2.5	-16%
Devon and Somerset	£26.9	£22.0	-£4.9	-18%
Dorset and Wiltshire	£17.6	£14.1	-£3.6	-20%
Durham	£12.3	£10.4	-£1.9	-15%
East Sussex	£13.3	£10.8	-£2.5	-19%
Essex	£29.4	£24.6	-£4.8	-16%
Gloucestershire	£7.1	£5.7	-£1.4	-20%
London	£233.4	£207.4	-£25.9	-11%
Greater Manchester	£56.5	£50.0	-£6.5	-11%
Hampshire	£25.9	£21.5	-£4.3	-17%
Hereford and Worcester	£9.7	£7.6	-£2.0	-21%
Hertfordshire	£16.6	£12.2	-£4.4	-27%
Humberside	£22.7	£19.8	-£2.9	-13%
Isle of Wight	£3.2	£2.7	-£0.5	-16%
Kent	£25.6	£21.0	-£4.6	-18%
Lancashire	£27.6	£23.8	-£3.8	-14%
Leicestershire	£15.4	£13.1	-£2.3	-15%
Lincolnshire	£11.4	£9.6	-£1.8	-16%
Merseyside	£35.0	£30.8	-£4.1	-12%
Norfolk	£14.0	£11.8	-£2.3	-16%
North Yorkshire	£10.5	£8.6	-£2.0	-19%
Northamptonshire	£9.3	£7.5	-£1.7	-19%
Northumberland	£6.4	£5.4	-£1.0	-16%
Nottinghamshire	£18.8	£16.0	-£2.8	-15%
Oxfordshire	£8.4	£5.1	-£3.3	-39%
Shropshire	£6.5	£5.2	-£1.4	-21%
South Yorkshire	£27.1	£23.7	-£3.4	-13%
Staffordshire	£16.8	£14.1	-£2.7	-16%
Suffolk	£9.7	£8.0	-£1.7	-18%
Surrey	£17.8	£11.5	-£6.3	-35%
Tyne and Wear	£27.4	£24.1	-£3.3	-12%
Warwickshire	£7.1	£4.2	-£3.0	-42%
West Midlands	£58.7	£52.0	-£6.6	-11%
West Sussex	£9.9	£5.4	-£4.4	-45%
West Yorkshire	£43.1	£37.7	-£5.5	-13%
TOTAL England	£1,013.0	£858.0	-£155.0	-15%