

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE MATTERS

A PARLIAMENTARY BULLETIN FOR MPS FROM THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION | JANUARY 2024



FIREFIGHTER NUMBERS CONTINUE TO BE CUT DESPITE INCREASING DEMANDS

After more than a decade of austerity, firefighter jobs continue to be cut according to new figures analysed by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

One-in-five firefighter jobs (20%) across the UK have been cut since 2010 – almost 12,000 jobs. This has had a significant impact on the resilience of the fire and rescue service. Fewer firefighters mean slower response times, fewer home visits, fewer inspections – all hitting our communities.

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.

AUSTERITY HITS HARD

Since 2010, more than 8,000 wholetime firefighters have been cut, while 3,000 retained firefighter posts have gone. Moreover, almost one in three control staff, who take the emergency calls and mobilise fire crews, have been lost.

Firefighters are being asked to do more with less. Storm Henk has shown the incredible stresses that firefighters are under to combat the devastating effects. Shockingly, fire and rescue services in England still don't have a statutory duty to plan and respond to floods like elsewhere in the UK – this needs to change.

Every part of the UK has felt the chilling effects of austerity – metropolitan, combined and county services – in all parts of the UK and under all devolved administrations, though not to the same degree. England was the

worst impacted of the four administrations, with almost 10,000 jobs cut, worst hit brigades were Buckinghamshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire.

CUTS IN THE LAST YEAR

Last year, in England there was a decrease of 150 frontline firefighter jobs. In Scotland, a similar picture, with a 1% decline in firefighter posts. While in Wales and Northern Ireland, there was an increase of 1% firefighter jobs each, after years of deep cuts. Some brigade's wholetime numbers have been particularly hit hard in the last year despite a small increase overall. Cleveland, Cornwall, East Sussex and Warwickshire were proportionally hardest hit.

Retained firefighters also bore the brunt of cuts in the last year – 1% decline – levels fell in a number of brigades, notably North Yorkshire Tyne and Wear and West Midlands. Control jobs decreased year on year with 20 posts being lost, after many years of harsh cuts – Lincolnshire, Shropshire and Tyne and Wear were the hardest hit.

FIREFIGHTERS' MANIFESTO NEEDED

In November 2023, the FBU launched the 'Firefighters' Manifesto: our service, our future' that outlined a programme for the fire and rescue service: a resilient, joined-up service with the resources it needs and a seat at the table for firefighters.

To meet the risks of today and tomorrow, central government and fire authorities must put sustainable investment into the fire and rescue service. The Firefighters' Manifesto does just that.

Firefighter jobs by brigade 2010-23 and 2022-23

Fire and rescue service	2010-23	2010-23 (%)	2022-23	2022-23 (%)
Scotland	-1,260	-16%	-63	-1%
Northern Ireland	-210	-11%	18	1%
Mid and West Wales	-104	-9%	- 7	-1%
North Wales	-120	-14%	26	4%
South Wales	-273	-16%	18	1%
Cleveland	-198	-31%	-20	-4%
Durham	-80	-14%	2	0%
Northumberland	-110	-26%	18	6%
Tyne and Wear	-304	-32%	-29	-4%
Humberside	-244	-23%	13	2%
North Yorkshire	-163	-21%	-47	-7%
South Yorkshire	-214	-23%	13	2%
West Yorkshire	-588	-34%	24	2%
Cheshire	-85	-11%	-1	0%
Cumbria	-161	-22%	-23	-4%
Greater Manchester	-611	-31%	-12	-1%
Lancashire	-302	-23%	1	0%
Merseyside	-231	-19%	-3	0%
North West Fire Control	66	N/A	-4	-6%
Derbyshire	-34	-4%	1	0%
Leicestershire	-205	-26%	-13	-2%
Lincolnshire	-142	-19%	-30	-5%
Northamptonshire	-119	-21%	-17	-4%
Nottinghamshire	-322	-33%	-16	-2%
Hereford and Worcester	-100	-14%	-11	-2%
Shropshire	-82	-14%	-6	-1%
Staffordshire	-309	-33%	-16	-3%
Warwickshire	-39	-9%	-32	-7%
West Midlands	-482	-25%	8	1%
Bedfordshire	-27	-5%	13	3%
Cambridgeshire	-143	-21%	25	5%
Essex	-227	-16%	-19	-2%
Hertfordshire	-155	-18%	-14	-2%
Norfolk	-55	-6%	16	2%
Suffolk	-188	-24%	1	0%
London	-1,349	-22%	39	1%
Berkshire	-103	-18%	-3	-1%
Buckinghamshire	-221	-35%	5	1%
East Sussex	-148	-20%	-10	-2%
Hampshire	-385	-21%	-	0%
Kent	-439	-26%	-7	-1%
Oxfordshire	-76	-12%	9	2%
Surrey	-140	-19%	-28	-4%
West Sussex	-193	-23%	21	3%
Avon	-220	-23%	44	6%
Cornwall	-52	-8%	-3	-1%
Devon and Somerset	-359	-17%	-28	-2%
Dorset and Wiltshire	-272	-21%	11	1%
Gloucestershire	-75	-14%	-1	0%
UK total	-11,853	-20%	-137	-0.3%

Data is from Home Office, Stats Wales, SFRS and FBU FOIs; NB.The phenomenon of "wholetime-retained" contracts essentially means double counting and thus the figures collated of actual employed and available at any one time are significantly less than official figures might suggest.

To access the Firefighters' Manifesto please visit <https://www.fbu.org.uk/publications/firefighters-manifesto>