



Funding

March 2013

Publicity Line

NFCC believes that more needs to be done to protect English Fire and Rescue Services from a 'perfect storm' of financial pressures in the period 2013-15 and possibly beyond if austerity measures continue into the next Parliament.

Formula grant cuts, localised council tax benefit, retained firefighters pension changes and the ever increasing cost of adult social care for county councils will have a massive cumulative impact on budgets.

Fire and rescue services (FRS) have little control or influence over many of these issues, yet they will seriously impact on the ability of FRS to deliver essential public services.

All fire and rescue services accept the need for efficiencies and savings in order to tackle an unprecedented public sector deficit. However, as an already efficient and effective public service, fire and rescue has limited scope to make these cuts in areas other than frontline services, including National Resilience.

Surveys conducted with Chief Fire Officers make it clear that almost all have reduced the number of firefighters they employ with 90% convinced further cutbacks will be required.

CFOA estimates that after significant efficiency savings are taken into account the fire and rescue service still faces a funding gap of at least £150 million in 2013-2015 - £90 million from direct grant cuts and £60 million from changes in council tax benefit localisation.

When taking account of the reductions in staff numbers already expected through ongoing recruitment freezes, this will see the loss of 4050 firefighter posts, 1150 fewer support posts and some 150 fewer fire appliances.

The impact of these cuts will be profound, affecting not just operational response, but also leading to very significant reductions in vitally important prevention and protection work, which has done so much to help the economy, improve social outcomes and reduce the number of deaths and injuries over the past decade.

CFOA believes that a new dialogue with government is needed to understand national resilience expectations for FRS and to agree a more transparent, sustainable funding mechanism for the sector.

England ✓	Wales ✗	Scotland ✗	Northern Ireland ✗
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NFCC will influence government to:

Better recognise the contribution that FRS make, in addition to firefighting, to address other key government priorities including:

- Providing national resilience for dealing with terrorism, flooding and other climate change issues
- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour
- Reducing deaths and serious injuries on the roads
- Protecting business premises and minimising commercial loss
- Improving opportunities for young people through work on youth inclusion, reducing youth offending, improving school attendance rates and increasing employment prospects
- Safeguarding children through the delivery of safety education programmes in schools
- Working with partners to improve health and wellbeing in local communities, particularly through FRS work with vulnerable people

Protect FRS from the impacts of the Council Tax Benefit localisation scheme given we have no direct levers to move people off benefits. The impact of localising council tax benefit on FRS could equate to a further grant cut of £60 million on top of the £207 million already required from the Spending Review, leading to further frontline reductions of 1650 firefighters or 35 stations

Vary the council tax referendum limits for fire to reflect the fact that Services cover several administrative boundaries - for example one FRS serves 14 district areas and would potentially have to hold 14 different costly referenda if it wished to increase local council tax

Clearly ringfence funding for county fire and rescue services to assist county councils in making informed decisions about resource allocation

Recognise the new burdens created by the new Fire and Rescue National Framework and fund us accordingly – FRS cannot keep doing a lot more with significantly less

Work with CFOA to review government risk assessments of the impacts of the cuts on national and local resilience

Provide clear data to the public on the combined effect of all the cuts and funding changes on their local FRS

Remove the barriers to FRS merging or combining especially the requirement to equalise council tax and provide funding to bridge the equalisation costs which are prohibitive for many FRS

A fundamental review, within this parliament, of the funding mechanisms for fire and rescue services in the future, with particular emphasis on the years of the next parliament (2015-2020)