



SERVICE
DELIVERY REVIEW

TEMPORARY APPLIANCE WITHDRAWAL 2023

REVIEW REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

On 4 September 2023, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) implemented some temporary changes. The purpose was to meet some immediate financial challenges and make the Service more efficient.

The changes included:

- Taking 10 fire appliances out of use temporarily from some stations with more than one appliance.
- Moving and removing some high-reach appliances, reducing from 26 to 16.
- Standardising Polmadie Community Fire Station's water rescue resource. Changing from a dedicated resource to a dual-crewing model.

The Scottish Government's Resource Spending Review asked public sector organisations to save money. SFRS needed to save around £11 million that year. These changes aimed to:

- Save around £4 million in staff costs.
- Cut overtime costs, which were around £12,000 per day at the time.
- Reduce the number of appliances that couldn't be used due to not having enough staff available.

The intended benefits of these changes were to

- Create immediate financial savings.
- Ease pressure within the organisation by choosing which resources would not be available.
- Have the least impact on response times.

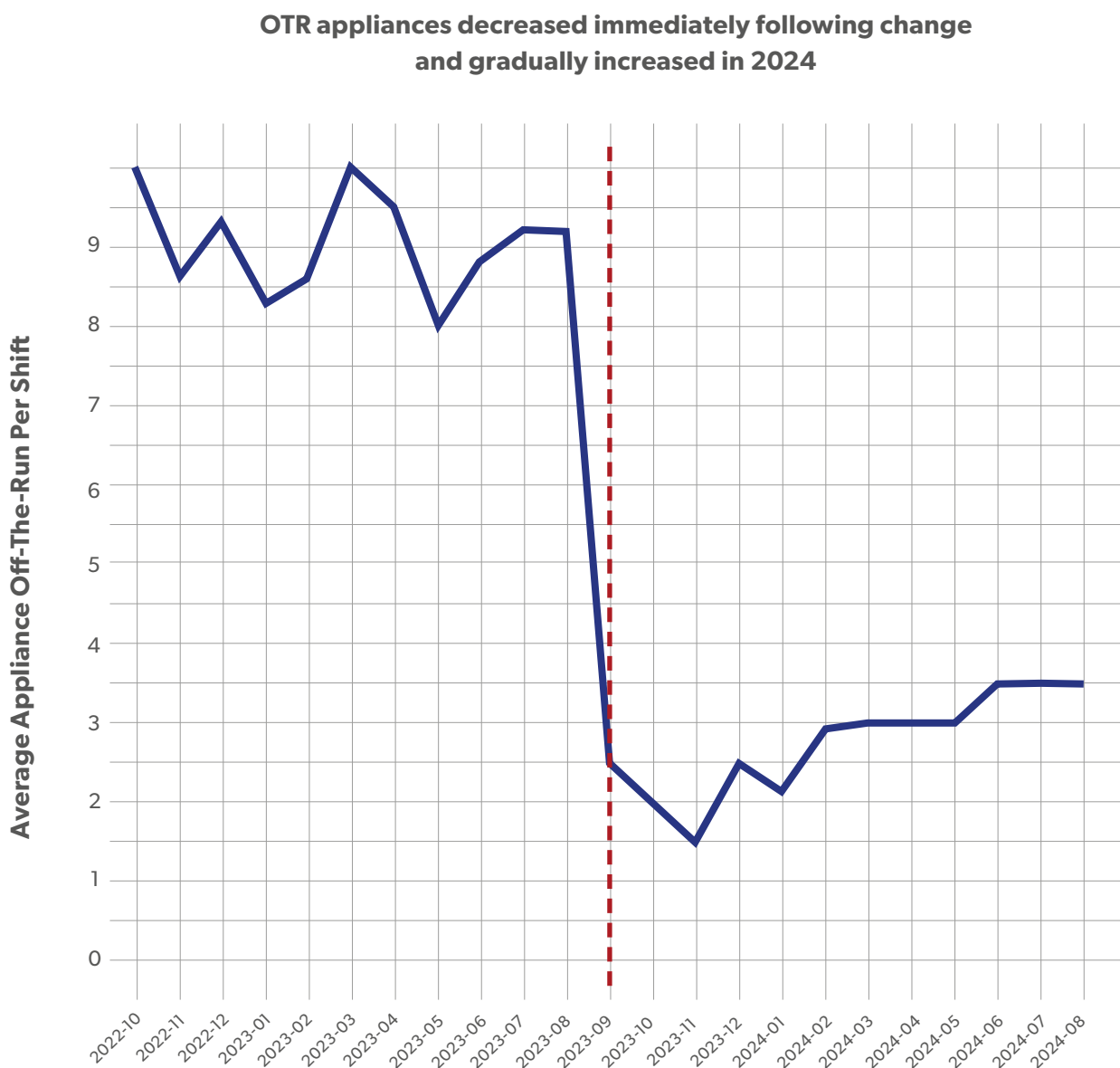
2. FINDINGS

2.1. Finance

- Together with other control measures, over £10 million was saved in 2023–24.

2.2. Operational activities

- Fewer fire appliances were off the run each day. The graph below shows that the temporary withdrawal had an immediate positive effect. The average per shift increased slightly in 2024, but at a far more manageable level.



- Response times for the first appliances mostly stayed the same.
- Second appliance response times were slower in some areas. For example, two to five minutes longer in parts of Fife and Glasgow. But we know the first appliance is the most important and effective in preserving life and property.

Here is an overview of the statistical findings on first and second appliance response times, broken down by area:

Glasgow

Response times for the first vehicle at the scene were largely unaffected.

Govan saw an increase of 18 seconds. Response times for second vehicles at the scene saw a greater impact, for example, Govan increased by 57 seconds.

Inverclyde

Response times for the first vehicle at the scene were largely unaffected.

Response times for second vehicles at the scene were slightly affected.

Dundee

Response times for the first vehicle at the scene were largely unaffected.

Response times for second vehicles at the scene increased by 30 seconds.

Lanarkshire

Response times for the first vehicle at the scene were largely unaffected.

Response times for second vehicles at the scene increased by 64 seconds.

Perth

Response times for first and second vehicles at the scene were largely unaffected.

Fife

Response times for the first and second vehicles at the scene varied across the area. Some stations' first and second vehicle response times increased, and others were unaffected.

- Home fire safety visits (HFSV) stayed steady, with some stations doing more than before.

Changes to our HFSV policy and new Scottish Government regulations regarding smoke and heat alarms have affected the number of HFSVs required. Additionally, other factors have led to a reduction in HFSVs across the Service.

The table below shows the number of HFSVs carried out at stations where a second or third appliance was removed in the year before the change, and the year following the change.

For comparison, the second table shows three single-appliance stations' HFSV numbers.

Table 1: HFSVs conducted since the 2nd pumps were removed at the listed stations

Station	Local Authority	Service Delivery Area	HFSVs carried out between 04/09/2022 – 03/09/2023	HFSVs carried out between 04/09/2023 – 03/09/2024	% Increase or decrease
Maryhill	Glasgow City	West	294	393	+33.6%
Govan	Glasgow City	West	283	316	+11.6%
Cowcaddens	Glasgow City	West	331	354	+6.9%
Greenock	Inverclyde	West	337	237	-29.6%
Hamilton	South Lanarkshire	West	584	446	-23.6%
Dunfermline	Fife	East	570	560	-1.7%
Glenrothes	Fife	East	454	385	-15.1%
Methil	Fife	East	286	346	+20.9%
Kingsway East	Dundee City	North	445	295	-33.7%
Perth	Perth and Kinross	North	514	480	-6.6%
TOTALS			4098	3812	-6.9%

Table 2: HFSVs conducted single pump stations as a comparator

Station	Local Authority	Service Delivery Area	HFSVs carried out between 04/09/2022 – 03/09/2023	HFSVs carried out between 04/09/2023 – 03/09/2024	% Increase or decrease
Bellshill	South Lanarkshire	West	400	417	+4.3%
Alloa	Clackmannanshire	East	473	436	-7.8%
Balmossie	Dundee City	North	411	309	-24.8%
TOTALS			1284	1162	-9.5%

2.3. Health and safety

- There was no impact on firefighter safety.
- No increase in injuries or serious fires in the areas affected.

To evaluate this, health and safety events that occurred when the station had two appliances in one year were compared against the number of events when the temporary withdrawal of one appliance was implemented for a year.

All events were taken into consideration, including accidents/injuries, near misses, acts of violence and vehicle accidents. The table shows the safety events reported since the second pumps were removed at the listed stations.

Table 3: Safety event reported since the second pumps were removed at the listed stations

Station	Local Authority	Service Delivery Area	Safety events reported between 04/09/2022 – 03/09/2023	Safety events reported between 04/09/2023 – 03/09/2024
Maryhill	Glasgow City	West	10	7
Govan	Glasgow City	West	7	4
Cowcaddens	Glasgow City	West	9	8
Greenock	Inverclyde	West	6	5
Hamilton	South Lanarkshire	West	4	4
Dunfermline	Fife	East	2	9
Glenrothes	Fife	East	4	3
Methil	Fife	East	6	4
Kingsway East	Dundee City	North	13	9
Perth	Perth and Kinross	North	12	18
TOTALS			73	68

- Training and safety stayed strong.

We evaluated two key areas of training at the impacted stations: breathing apparatus (BA) and driving. BA skills stayed strong, and competency levels were similar to before the temporary appliance withdrawal.

Driver training saw an improvement overall from the year before the changes were made.

2.4. Staff morale

- Firefighters were moved to other stations, often closer to home, which helped morale in some places. Moves to accommodate the changes were handled at a local level.
- Morale was reported to be lower in some stations, especially where colleagues felt left out of the decision-making. As mentioned above, the necessary moves to accommodate the changes were handled at the local level.

Local senior officers gathered feedback from affected areas to determine the impact on morale.

2.5. Public perception

- It was reported that some members of the public were worried about slower response times.

This was based on anecdotal feedback received regarding the changes.

2.6. Data

- Data issues with the incident reporting system (IRS) made it difficult to fully measure the impact in some areas.

3. LESSONS LEARNED

The review suggested that SFRS should:

- Improve transparency in our communications with staff and the public before making big changes.
- Use better data tools to plan and explain changes.
- Listen more to staff and communities.
- Balance the speed of response with other important things like having the right equipment and enough trained people. Response times are not the only metric we should rely on to determine the effectiveness of our response.



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

firescotland.gov.uk

Temporary Appliance Withdrawal 2023 Review report

Version 1 June 2025