

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	CSC/25/3
MEETING	COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	31 JANUARY 2025
SUBJECT OF REPORT	EMERGENCY RESPONSE STANDARDS PERFORMANCE REVIEW: 2024/25 QUARTER THREE
LEAD OFFICER	Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Director of Service Delivery
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the report be noted.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>This report provides an in-depth review of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) performance against its Emergency Response Standards (ERS) for dwelling fires and road traffic collisions (RTCs).</p> <p>The report focuses on performance for the 2024/25 financial year to date but will draw on data from 2020/21 onwards to illustrate trends and identify themes.</p> <p>There are a number of factors that influence ERS performance, some of which are outside the Service's control but there are areas in which improvements may be made. The report provides analysis of overall performance and that of the components that comprise ERS: call handling, turnout and travel times.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Existing budget and staffing are sufficient to deliver required improvements.
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS (ERBA)	N/A
APPENDICES	A - Emergency Response Standards Performance Review
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	Community Safety Committee Performance Report – Quarter 3 2024/25

Emergency Response Standards Performance Review

This report provides an in-depth review of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) performance against its Emergency Response Standards for dwelling fires and road traffic collisions (RTCs). The report focuses on performance for the 2024/25 financial year to date but will draw on data from 2020/21 onwards to illustrate trends and identify themes.

1. **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. During 2008/09 the Service piloted new ERS for dwelling fires and RTCs. The ERS were developed through a joint research project between DSFRS and Dorset Fire and Rescue Service, in conjunction with Professor Roger Maull of Exeter University.
- 1.2. The focus of the research was twofold:
 - to identify the factors that increase the likelihood of an event occurring and locations of greatest risk to support targeted delivery of prevention activity
 - to identify the optimum resourcing requirements and time frames to minimise life risk and impact of dwelling fires and RTCs should they occur.
- 1.3. Following a public consultation the new Emergency Response Standards were fully implemented in 2009/10.

2. **ERS DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1. The ERS definitions set out the minimum resourcing requirements for dwelling fires and RTCs. Where additional resources are required to manage an incident, this will be done through make-ups following mobilisation of the initial response.
- 2.2. The requirements vary depending on the nature of the incident, with additional resources required if the risk associated with the incident, both to firefighters and the public, is deemed greater.
- 2.3. The response time is measured from the point that the emergency call is answered in Control to the point at which the required resources arrive on scene at the incident.

2.4. Table one sets out the ERS requirements. For dwelling fires, it states that one appliance is required to meet the equipment needs of the incident. In reality, two appliances will be mobilised inside the 10-minute zone and three outside to ensure sufficient crew.

2.5 Table one: ERS requirements for dwelling fires and RTCs

	Crew	Resources	Response time aim
<i>Dwelling fires:</i>			
Inside 10-minute response	9	One appliance	First in 10 mins Full in 13 mins
Outside 10-minute response	12	One appliance	No response time
<i>RTCs:</i>			
Single carriageway	8	Two appliances with defined equipment	First in 15 mins Full in 18 mins
Multi carriageway	10	Three appliances with defined equipment	First in 15 mins Full in 18 mins

3. **PERFORMANCE**

3.1. The corporate key performance indicators (KPI) for ERS are focused on the arrival duration of the first appliance. This is because the time of first response has the greatest bearing on survivability.

3.2. Table 2: ERS KPI definition and targets

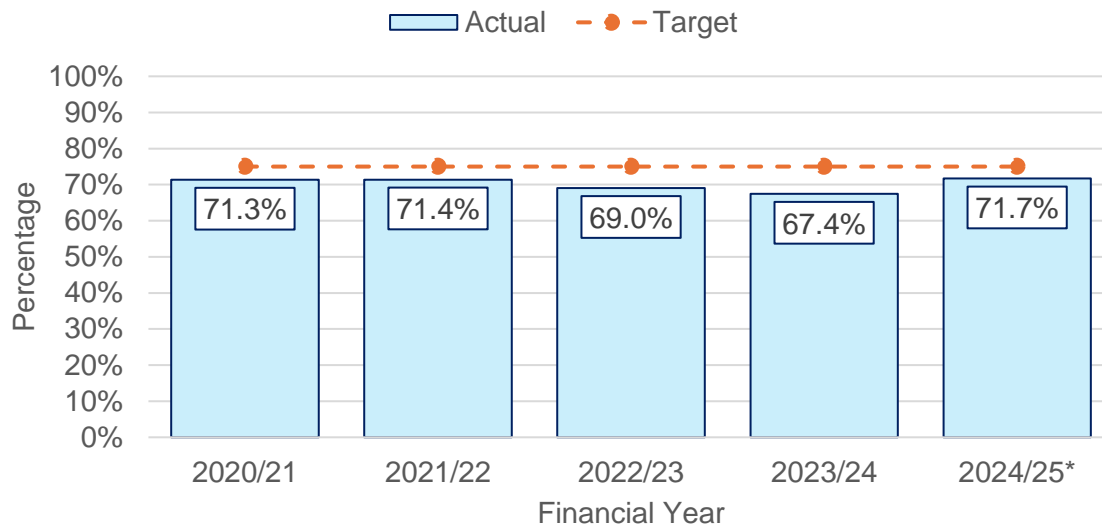
ERS	KPI	Target
Dwelling fires	First response to arrive on scene within 10 minutes of emergency call answer (excludes late fire calls)	75.0%
RTCs	First response to arrive on scene within 15 minutes of emergency call answer	75.0%

3.3. **Dwelling fire performance**

3.3.1. Dwelling fire ERS performance for 2024/25 year-to-date stands at 71.7%, 3.3 pp below the 75.0% target.

3.3.2. As shown in table 3, while performance is below target, there has been a marked improvement of 4.3 pp compared to previous year.

3.3.3. Table 3: dwelling fire ERS performance 2020/21 to 2024/25*



*YTD April to December

3.3.4. Overall performance includes all qualifying dwelling fire ERS incidents, irrespective of location. This means that on average, around one-sixth of incidents are unlikely to be achievable. Therefore, the maximum achievable ERS percentage stands at around 83.0%.

3.3.5. Table 4: percentage of dwelling fire ERS incidents within 10-minute response zone.

Incidents in response zone (%)					
Period -->	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25*
Dwelling fire	81.2%	82.7%	82.7%	82.6%	85.8%

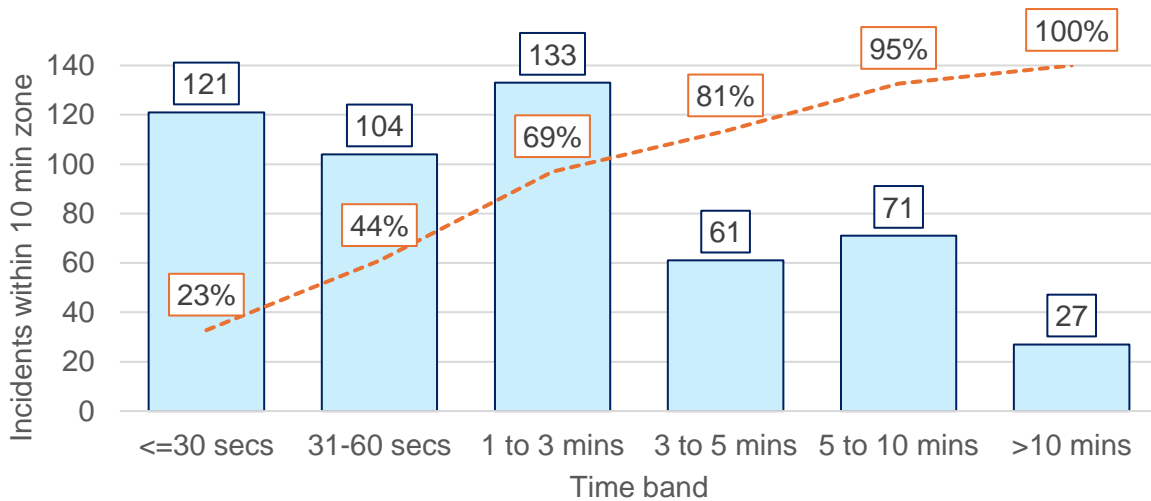
3.3.6. During 2024/25 to date, a higher proportion of incidents have been located within a 10-minute response zone of our stations. It is likely that this has had a positive effect on performance.

3.3.7. The Service monitors all incidents and in particular those where we did not achieve the ERS. However, to improve overall performance, we need to focus on those incidents that are potentially achievable i.e., those within the 10-minute response zone.

3.3.8. Table 5 is a Pareto chart showing incidents within the 10-minute response zone where the dwelling fire ERS was not met, by the failure duration (i.e., the length of time the target was exceeded by).

3.3.9. Almost a quarter of the incidents failed to meet the standard by 30 seconds or less, with almost half missing the target by less than one minute.

3.3.10. Table 5: ERS dwelling fire incidents within the 10-minute response zone by failure time band.



3.4. RTC Performance

3.4.1. RTC ERS performance for 2024/25 year-to-date stands at 69.5%, 5.5 pp below the 75.0% target.

3.4.2. As shown in table 6, while performance is well below target, there has also been a marked decrease of 3.3 pp compared to previous year. With 2024/25 to-date the lower than each of the previous four years.

3.4.3. Table 6: RTC ERS performance 2020/21 to 2024/25*



3.4.4. As with dwelling fires ERS, overall performance includes all qualifying ERS incidents, irrespective of location. This means that on average, around 18% of incidents are unlikely to be achievable due to their location being outside a 15-minute response zone of a station. Therefore, the maximum achievable ERS percentage stands at around 82.0%.

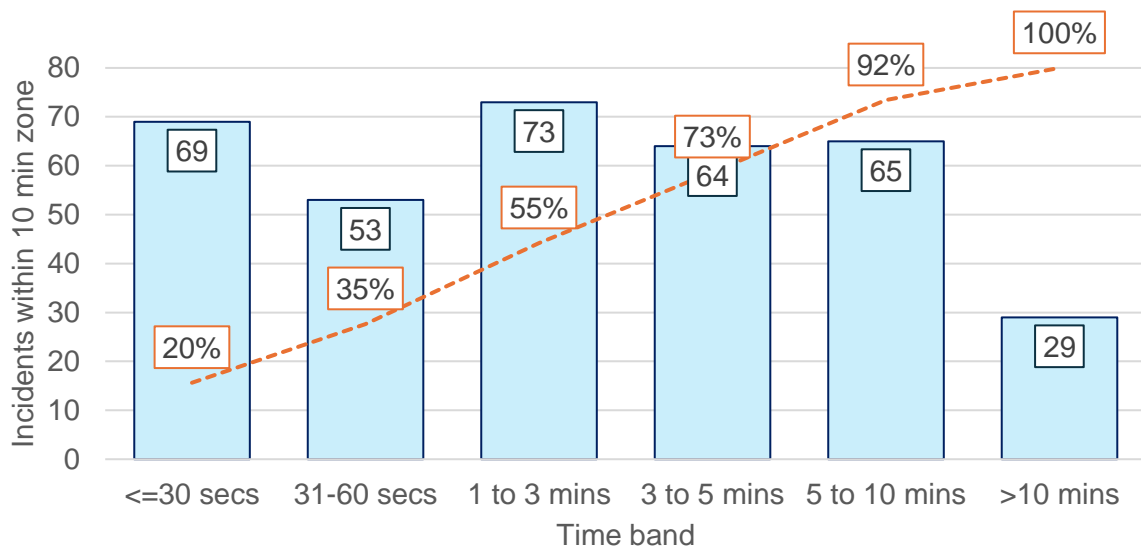
3.4.5. Table 7: Percentage of RTC ERS incidents within 15-minute response zone.

Incidents in response zone (%)					
Period -->	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25*
RTC	83.3%	83.3%	81.7%	81.6%	80.2%

3.4.6. Table 8 is a Pareto chart showing incidents within the 15-minute response zone where the RTC ERS was not met, by the failure duration (i.e., the length of time the target was exceeded by).

3.4.7. Around a fifth of the incidents located within a 15-minute response zone that failed to meet the ERS standard did so by 30 seconds or less, with a further 15% missing the target by 60 seconds or less.

3.4.8. Table 8: ERS dwelling fire incidents within the 15-minute response zone by failure time band.



3.4.9. While most incidents happen within a response zone, we have little control over where they will occur. Therefore, fluctuations from the norm such as those identified in both ERS categories during 2024/25 to date can have a significant effect on performance.

3.5. Influencing factors

3.5.1. Identifying where small improvements can be made can have a significant impact on overall performance. The following sections look at the three components of response: call handling, turnout and travel.

3.5.2. Understanding the relative impact of performance of each component and the factors that affect that performance, helps us to identify where improvements can be made.

3.5.3. **Call handling time**

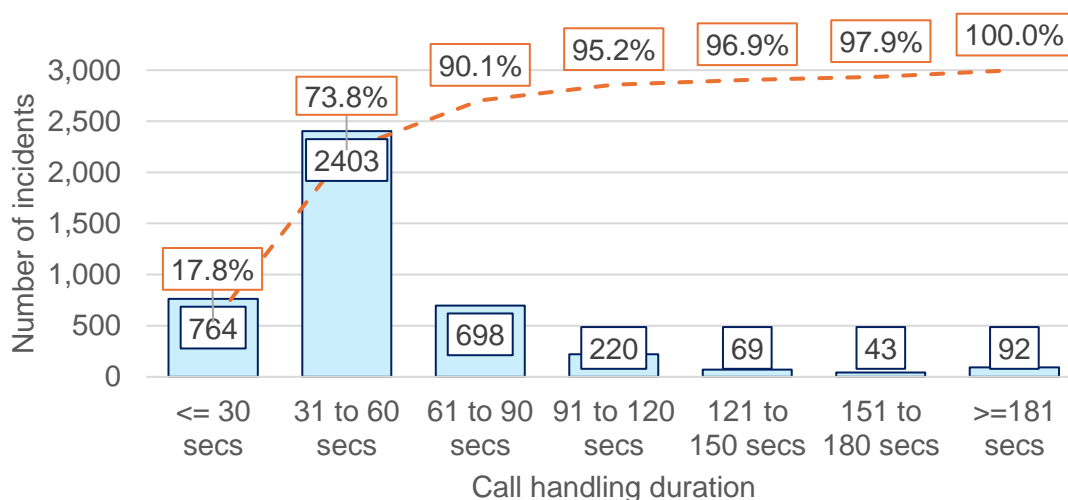
3.5.4. Call handling time is measured from the point that the emergency call is answered to the point at which the initial response is alerted to attend.

3.5.5. The target call handling time for dwelling fires is 90 seconds and RTCs is 120 seconds as it is often more challenging to obtain an accurate location. Call handlers ask a series of questions to quickly and effectively identify the nature and location of an incident.

3.5.6. Call handling time can be impeded if the caller is unable to identify their location. While this is less common in incidents like dwelling fires that are happening in an addressable location, callers may be confused or not local to the area.

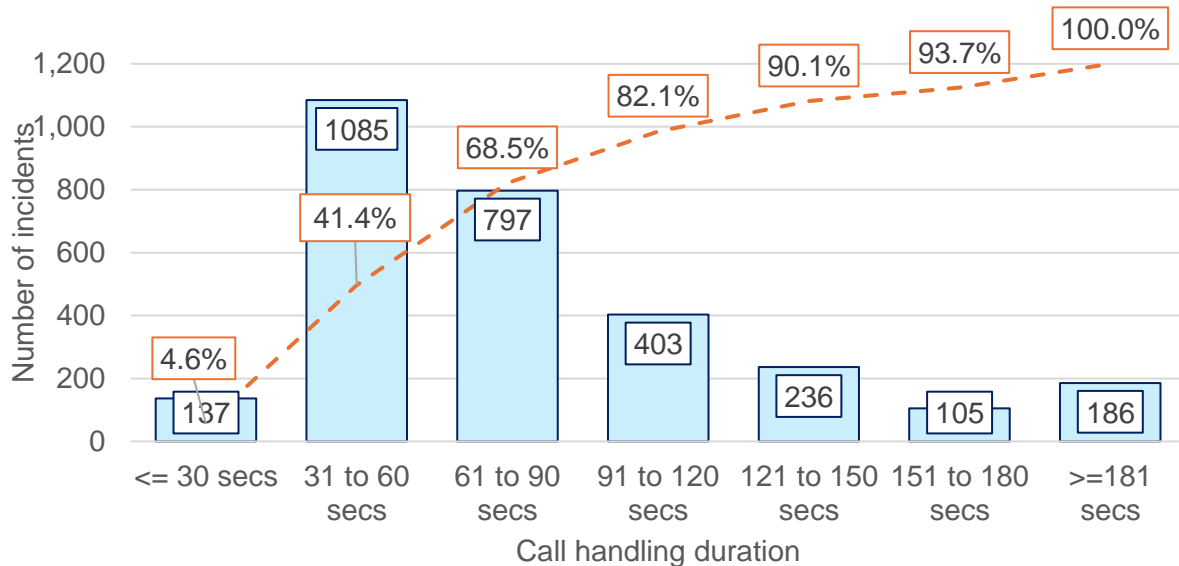
3.5.7. Table 9 is a Pareto chart showing call handling times for all dwelling fire ERS incidents between April 2020 and December 2024. An average of 90% of dwelling fire ERS calls were handled in 90 seconds or less. With almost three-quarters of calls handled in 60 seconds or less. Table 6 provides a breakdown of call handling times by financial year and time band.

3.5.8. Table 9: call handling times for dwelling fire ERS incidents April 2020 to December 2024.



3.5.9. Table 8 is a Pareto chart showing call handling times for all RTC ERS incidents between April 2020 and December 2024. An average of 69% of RTC ERS calls were handled in 120 seconds or less. With around 41% handled in 60 seconds or less.

3.5.10. Table 10: call handling times for RTC ERS incidents April 2020 to December 2024



3.5.11. Call handling has been a factor in around 9.0% of dwelling fire ERS failures and 12.3% of RTC ERS failures in the past five years. However, as shown in table 11, the percentage of incidents affected has been increasing slightly year-on-year. It has been identified that this is likely due to increased levels of call challenge that have been implemented across all incident categories.

3.5.12. Table 11: proportion of dwelling fire ERS failures with extended call handling time as a contributing factor

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25*	Total
Dwelling fires	7.2%	8.5%	9.2%	10.1%	10.8%	9.0%
RTCs	6.9%	12.0%	12.7%	13.1%	19.7%	12.3%

3.5.13. Other than increased call challenge, the most common cause of delays in call handling time is difficulty obtaining the location of the incident from the caller. This can be particularly challenging for RTCs as they are not generally at addressable locations.

- 3.5.14. Obtaining an accurate location is key to getting the right resources to the right location as quickly as possible and while speed is important, accuracy is essential. Quality control processes are in place with recorded calls dip tested and assessed by managers.
- 3.5.15. Call handling times should continue to be monitored. However, it should also be noted that call handling impacts far fewer incidents than extended turnout and travel times.

3.6. Turnout times

- 3.6.1. Turnout time is the duration from the point at which a crew is alerted to an incident, to the point at which the appliance books mobile. The target turnout time for wholetime (WDS) crews is 90 seconds and for on-call crews is 300 seconds.
- 3.6.2. As shown in table 12, over the five-year period, turnout time was a contributory factor in a third of dwelling fire ERS failures and one-fifth of RTC ERS failures. However, 2023/24 and 2024/25 have seen a slightly higher proportion of incidents affected.
- 3.6.3. Table 12: proportion of ERS failures with extended turnout time as a contributing factor by financial year

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25*	Total
Dwelling fires	32.0%	31.2%	32.5%	35.7%	35.9%	33.3%
RTCs	29.9%	29.4%	31.3%	27.1%	35.7%	30.7%

- 3.6.4. This increase is reflective of a rise in the average (median) turnout time of on-call crews. Although, WDS times have remained largely consistent.
- 3.6.5. Table 13: median turnout time for on-call crews, all incidents by financial year

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25*
On-call	284	296	301	316	325
WDS	90	84	81	84	81

- 3.6.6. The cause of the increase in on-call turnout times requires further investigation, however, it is possible that the introduction of P4A has influenced this.
- 3.6.7. Prior to P4A, any crew members that were available would respond to station when alerted. With the pump mobilising when as soon as a competent crew was present (driver, OIC and sufficient firefighters).

- 3.6.8. P4A sees a predetermined crew respond to station. This means that the response may be slightly delayed if personnel take longer to turn-in to station.
- 3.6.9. Turnout times can be delayed by a number of factors including equipment and communication failures, but most commonly delays are related to traffic congestion.

3.7. Travel time

3.7.1. As mentioned previously, incident location is largely outside our control and has a significant impact on travel time and ERS performance. However, there are a number of other causes of delays in travel time with the most common issues being congestion, road works and difficulty locating the incident.

3.7.2. Table 14: percentage of incidents failing to meet ERS affected by extended travel time.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Dwelling	60.9%	60.2%	58.3%	54.3%	53.3%	57.7%
RTCs	55.7%	51.9%	51.1%	52.5%	44.9%	51.0%

3.7.3. Table 15: percentage of incidents failing to meet ERS affected by extended travel time, inside response zones.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Dwelling	54.2%	51.9%	51.6%	46.1%	45.9%	50.0%
RTCs	52.4%	49.6%	50.3%	51.1%	40.9%	48.8%

3.7.4. As demonstrated in tables 15, around half of incidents that failed to meet the ERS standards were affected by delays in travel.

3.7.5. Unavailability of appliances also has an impact on ERS performance. Table 16 shows the proportion of ERS failures inside response zones that were likely¹ to be a result of appliance unavailability.

3.7.6. Table 16: percentage of ERS failures within response zones, affected by unavailability of home appliance.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Dwelling	17.3%	16.9%	29.8%	22.1%	24.4%	22.4%
RTCs	27.4%	23.5%	40.2%	47.7%	38.4%	36.1%

¹ These have been identified as incidents that were not attended by the home appliance. Only incidents within response zones have been included as these would most likely see the fastest response from the home station.

3.7.7. It is notable that 2022/23 onwards see a higher proportion of incidents impacted by unavailability. This is reflective of a decline in availability levels.

3.7.8. Table 17: appliance availability levels by financial year.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
RDA	60.9%	55.4%	61.0%	61.5%	57.5%
Standard	81.9%	79.0%	80.5%	79.1%	77.2%
Priority	95.9%	90.8%	93.3%	92.6%	90.8%

3.7.9 The increase in affected incidents doesn't directly correspond with overall availability levels. However, it is likely that it is linked to unavailability of specific appliances i.e., if busier appliances are unavailable. (whether due to being off the run or engaged at another incident).