

Welsh Government

Consultation – summary of responses

Proposed changes to the collection and publication of fire statistics

9 July 2015

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Proposed Changes to the Collection and Publication of Fire Statistics

User Consultation – Results

1. Introduction

A summary of the background to the consultation is provided in this report. The full background to the consultation is available in the consultation document:

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/fire/?lang=en&status=closed>

The purpose of this Summary of Responses document is to summarise the responses received and present our findings following the consultation on proposed changes to the collection and publication of fire statistics. Data on fires and special service incidents are recorded on the electronic Incident Recording System (IRS) and is outside of the scope of this consultation. Similarly performance indicators for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in Wales are outside the scope of this consultation.

FRAs in Wales and other key stakeholders work collaboratively to reduce the number of fires, fire deaths, and fire related injuries. To support this, the Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Services department collects, analyses and disseminates data on many aspects of Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) activity in Wales under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. It is responsible for promoting its use as part of the evidence base in the development and monitoring of policy.

Responsibility for fire and rescue statistics was devolved to Wales in 2005 and the first data collection was for 2005-06. The Knowledge and Analytical Services collected a large amount of data from FRAs on an annual basis and produced ad hoc outputs on specific topics such as grassland fires.

The latest statistical releases on operational statistics are available here:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/fire-rescue-services-operational-statistics-data-collection/?lang=en>

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/fire-rescue-service-operational-statistics/?lang=en>

In 2011-12, a consultation and response was published proposing changes to the data collection and publication of fire statistics in Wales. This can be accessed online:

<http://gov.wales/consultations/statistics/fire/?status=closed&lang=en>

Since this consultation, we have completed three sets of annual data collections and publications and in conjunction with the Fire and Rescue Services, we considered this an appropriate time to review the operational fire data we collect and publish.

2. Summary

The consultation commenced on 19th February 2015 and concluded on 19th March 2015. The rationale for the proposed changes was included in the consultation documents which were published via the Welsh Government website, available at the following link:

<http://gov.wales/consultations/statistics/fire/?lang=en&status=closed>

Welsh Government collects a significant amount of operational fire data and there is evidence that some of this data is of little or no benefit to stakeholders or the public. The purpose of this consultation was to seek users' views on proposals to change the data collection, and to assist both the Welsh Government and FRS's to work smarter and focus effort on collating and publishing relevant data.

2.1 Proposal - Changes to the data collection of operational statistics in Wales

The main aim of the consultation was to seek users' views on the following proposals covering four main topics; Human Resource, Community Fire Safety, Fire Safety and Operational Forms. The details of the changes proposed under each topic are listed below.

Human Resources Forms

- Human resources Fire and Rescue Service posts - Whole time (HRFW1), Retained (HRFW2), Fire control (HRFW3), Non-operational (HRFW4a) – Breakdown of post types to be revised
- Human resources Fire and Rescue Service staff, including gender and ethnicity – all data tables to be removed.
 - (HRFW4b) – Top 5% of earners
 - (HRFW10) & (HRFW11) – Whole time staff
 - (HRFW12) & (HRFW13) – Retained staff
 - (HRFW14) & (HRFW15) – Fire Control staff
 - (HRFW14) & (HRFW15) – Non operational staff
 - All recruitment tables (HRFW18 – HRFW33 inclusive)
 - (HRFW34) – Retention
- Headcounts of whole time staff, retained staff, fire control staff and non operational staff will still be collected and added for collection to data tables HRFW1, HRFW2, HRFW3 and HRFW4.
- Human Resources Health and Safety.
 - Tables on injuries during incidents (HRFW80), injuries during training (HRFW81) and injuries during routine activities (HRFW82) to be simplified and merged into 1 table.
 - To stop collecting data on vehicle accidents (HRFW83) and near misses (HRFW85)

Community Fire Safety (FSRW)

- Community Fire Safety (FSRW1) – To remove current data collection table and replace with a new table.

Fire Safety Forms (FSW)

- Fire Safety Audits & Outcomes (FSW1) – to stop collecting data on hours spent.
- Enforcement Activity (FSW2) – To remove current data collection table

Operational Forms (OPSW)

- Retain tables with either no changes or with small changes to text or design

This document provides a summary of the responses to the consultation as well as confirming plans for the 2014/15 data collection.

2.2 Consultation respondents

In total 6 responses to the consultation were received, of these:

- 5 were from Fire and Rescue Services; and
- 1 was from 'other' - Public Sector;

We value the opinion of our stakeholders and users and want to thank those who have taken the time to read and respond to the consultation. All feedback received has been considered in informing the next steps.

The report below includes a summary of responses as well as some direct quotes where relevant. Not all respondents answered all questions.

3. Method

The full questions asked in the consultation are attached in the [Annex 1](#).

The background document explaining the consultation and the response form are accessible via the Welsh Government consultations website:

<http://gov.wales/consultations/statistics/fire/?lang=en&status=closed>

Responses were received in excel response forms, online response forms, word documents (where additional information was provided) or as e-mailed comments. All recipients were given the opportunity to submit their views anonymously, but none opted to do so.

4. Results and Next Steps

For a more detailed description of changes please see [Annex 2](#).

The majority of respondents were supportive of our proposals and the removal of several forms. There were specific concerns and recommendations with some proposals, for example ensuring guidance notes are updated to remove ambiguity over new terms in the Human Resources (HRFW) Return.

The proposal for the removal of some of the Human Resources forms (HRFW), Fire Safety forms (FSW) and some minor amendments to Operational forms (OPSW) were agreed.

Following further engagement with key stakeholders, changes have been agreed and implemented for the 2014-15 collection. We will, of course, continue to regularly review our activity and seek our users' feedback to enable us to most efficiently meet as wide a range of user requirements as possible and ensure we continue to be reactive to emerging priorities.

Human Resources Forms

75 per cent of those responding to this question agreed in principle with proposals. Based on these responses, the following will be implemented;

- As per consultation, tables from the human resources (HRFW) collection will be revised, changes will be made to the following tables:

Whole time Posts (HRFW1), Retained Duty System Posts (HRFW2), Fire Control Posts (HRFW3), Non-operational Posts and Strengths (HRFW4a), Health & Safety Fire and Rescue Service Injuries during Operational Incidents (HRFW80).

- As per consultation, the following tables will be removed:

Top 5 per cent of Earners (HRFW4b), Whole-time, Retained, Control, Non-operational (gender, age, ethnic origin) (HRFW10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16- 17), Recruitment and Unsuccessful by gender and ethnicity (HRFW 18-19, 20-21, 22-23, 24-25, 26-27, 28-29, 30-31, 32-33), Vehicle Accidents (HRFW83), Near Misses (HRFW85),

- The tables 'Injuries in Training' and 'Injuries in Routine Activities' (HRFW 81 and 82) will be merged into service injuries during operational incidents (HRFW80).
- Guidance notes for the collections above will be updated where amendments have applied.

Community Fire Safety

60 per cent of those responding to this question agreed in principle to proposals, whilst 20 per cent broadly agreed. There were also concerns that changes to the Community Safety forms (FSRW) return could not be implemented in time for the 2014-15 collection.

- The current Community Fire Safety Return (FSRW) will be replaced with a new return with more focus on home fire safety checks and children and young people interventions.
- The Community Fires Safety Return (FSRW) is presently being reviewed by officers in the FRAs. Therefore, the existing return will apply for 2014-15 collection but new returns will be agreed shortly which will apply to the data collected for 2015-16.
- Following implementation the Welsh government will continually monitor and review the impact of these changes to ensure user needs continue to be met and that the quality of information published is not adversely affected.

Fire Safety Forms (FSW)

All respondents who answered this question agreed with proposals, therefore the following will be implemented to Fire and Safety returns;

- As per consultation, the tables 'Audits and Outcomes' (FSW1) will remain unchanged and 'Other Enforcement Activity' (FSW2) will be removed from the 2014-15 collection.

Operational Forms (OPSW)

This question received mixed responses; however this was mainly due to respondents suggesting additional changes to the proposed including the removal of OPS6 Section 6ii and 6iii. False alarms can potentially draw FRA's away from emergency incidents and it was decided that this data will continue to be collected and monitored.

Therefore, calls handled by fire control (OPSW6), will remain unchanged for the 2014-15 data collection and changes will be made to the Fire Stations table (OPSW11).

5. Summary of Responses

Textual responses in letters or emails that may not have directly answered any of the following questions and are therefore not included in the analysis below, however general comments and recommendations are included as appropriate.

5.1 Question 1

Do you agree with the proposal to the following changes to the Human Resources HRFW Return?

This question required a Yes or No response; respondents were also given the opportunity to provide further comments.

There were four responses received in relation to this question. Three responses (75 per cent) agreed to proposals, whilst one (25 per cent) broadly agreed. Whilst there were no objections responders emphasised the need for further clarification regarding some of the specific changes. One responder emphasised that many of the suggested HRFW data proposed for removal will continue to be captured locally for planning and monitoring purposes.

Concerns were raised by some respondents about the need for clear and precise guidance in completing the new data collection forms. Comments included the following:

“... agrees in principle to the removal and merger of data tables as suggested and the associated updating of guidance notes”

“...Broadly agree, in relation to HRFW1 can you clarify the purpose of breaking the data down by grade, when grades in comparison across the 3 FRS' may be different in terms of salary to enable any worthwhile benchmarking?”

“We support the removal of: HRFWs 4b, 18-33 and 34, and also HRFWs 82, 83 and 85 New HRFW1 - the titles of 'corporate' and 'operational' are unclear.....New HRF4a and existing HRF7 - clarification needed for the term 'non-operational' to differentiate from Grey Book 'non-operational staff.... New HRFW1, HRFW3 and HRFW4a - we support the intention to introduce a column to record the headcount of staff, and wonder whether column b. of the new HRFW2 might be re-titled as a headcount for consistency..... HRFW80 and HRFW81 - we support the proposal to merge these two returns but suggest - clarifying/amending what is needed”

Acknowledging all responses received, the decision has been taken to go ahead with proposed changes to the Human Resource returns for the 2014-15 collection. We will ensure that the definitions and accompanying guidance are clear particularly in relation to new terms introduced, and will continue to work closely with FRS's to support consistent reporting.

5.2 Question 2

Do you agree with the proposal to the following change to the Community Fire Safety FSRW Return?

This question required a Yes or No answer; respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional comments.

There were five responses received in relation to this question. Three responses (60 per cent) agreed to proposals, whilst one (20 per cent) broadly agreed. One response however, expressed concern regarding the proposal to stop collecting “total community fire safety (number of hours spent) and fire prevention inspection (number of hours). In general, responses emphasised the need for a coordinative approach to develop a more comprehensive return and guidance.

The comments provided in these responses included the following:

“...understands the rationale for the reduction in the data sets collected in relation to CFS activities and looks forward to working with Welsh Government in developing a more comprehensive and reflective data set to demonstrate the activity and subsequent community outcomes of its wider proactive preventative agenda”

“We support the replacement of FRSWs, and look forward to working with Welsh Government officials in compiling the replacement collection forms. Because of the tight timescales it may be that new data for 2014-15 or even 2015-16 will not be available.”

“...we currently use are "total community fire safety (number of hours spent) and fire prevention inspection (number of hours).....the only issue I foresee causing us problems is your proposal to stop collecting data on hours spent for fire safety audits and outcomes”

We will take all comments into consideration, and proceed in developing a new return focussing on Home Fire Safety checks and Children and Young people interventions with input from stakeholders. We acknowledge current time restrictions and therefore the existing return will apply for 2014-15 collection, with the new return applying to data collected for 2015-16.

5.3 Question 3

Do you agree with the proposal to the following changes to the Fire Safety FSW Return?

This question required a Yes or No answer; respondents were given the opportunity to provide further comments

All five respondents who answered this question selected ‘Yes’ in agreement of the proposed.

Responses to this question included the following:

“A better approach to fire safety performance reporting would be for the three Welsh fire and rescue service’s to produce a common reporting strategy perhaps agreed by the National Issues Committee (NIC) which could be consulted on and agreed by the business community. As well as delivering more useful information this approach may help assist in economic growth which is a primary requirement of the Regulators’ Code 2014”

“The number of hours taken to undertake a fire safety audit is irrelevant and doesn’t inform anything. Local (FSW2) data, i.e. building regulations consultations etc. will continue to be collected locally”

As suggestions under this proposal were agreed by all responders, the proposed changes will be implemented for the 2014/15 collection.

5.4 Question 4

Do you agree with the proposal to the following changes to the Operational Statistics OPSW Return?

This question received mixed responses. Of the four responses received in relation to this question, two (50%) agreed with the proposed retention of OPSW6. However, two respondents (50%) suggested the additional removal of OPS6 as data was difficult to obtain.

The comments provided in these responses included the following:

“... (We) would welcome the additional removal of OPS6 Section 6ii and 6iii where there is reference to multiple false alarm attendance at premises. This is monitored locally in a different format and providing the information for this return incurs an additional reporting burden.”

“... (We) have not populated OPS 6 (PARA 6ii or 6iii) for many years as we do not have the data readily available. “

“OPSW6 - we support the retention of this return which will provide supplementary detail to the new strategic PI on AFA false alarms.”

Having considered all the information gathered, we have decided to continue to collect the information in OPS6 Section 6ii and 6iii for the 2014-15 return, as this data is currently used by the Welsh Government.

5.5 Question 5

What impact will the proposals have on your work?

There were five responses received in relation to this question. Of these one (20%) did not feel it would impact on work while four (80%) responders felt that at this stage they were unable to comment on how this may impact on their work and data set management.

The comments provided included the following:

“It usually takes around five hours to complete the FSW1&2 returns so there would be a minor time-saving if they were not required. However, there would be some time required to agree and implement a new set of performance information.”

“...a high proportion of the data sets being removed will still be collated at a local level as part of the organisations wider performance management data set.”

“This data will be used locally for the effective management of the Service and its functions and will likely factor in the core/local indicators. It is pleasing to note the review of data is focusing on its value and how data is being used to inform decisions in making Wales safer”

“The information for some of the removed returns will still need to be maintained locally to meet other external reporting requirements and for local management and planning purposes.”

Having reviewed responses we are content that current proposals will not adversely impact on staff time and resources, we will continue to monitor the impact and further assess once changes have been fully implemented.

5.6 Question 6

Can you provide any reasons why these changes cannot be implemented for the 2015-16 data collection?

There were five responses received in relation to this question. Of these one (20%) did not see any reason for implementation of changes for 2014-15, while four (80%) responders felt that there was inadequate time to agree and implement select proposals before 2015-16.

The comments provided included the following:

“... (We) have concerns that data required under the Community Safety FSRW may not be readily available for the period 2014-15 and therefore would create an incomplete data set.”

“Implementation of returning this data from 2014-15 would not cause us any difficulty, as this means returning less data than is currently the case.”

“New FSRW1F is still under development, so it is possible that the information will not have been gathered or will not be available for extraction in the format required for the 2014-15 year. Changes to databases and new reports from electronic systems may need to be completed to enable reporting - depending on timescales and content this may affect the 2015-16 year too...”

We acknowledge current time restrictions and therefore the existing return for Community Safety Return (FSRW) will apply for 2014-15 collection, allowing time for the development of the new return, which will then apply to data collected for 2015-16.

5.7 Question 7

Is there any data that is not collected that you would like to see collected?

There were 5 responses received in relation to this question, three responders suggested new possible areas for data collection, two responders felt the data currently collected is sufficient for the time being.

The comments provided included the following:

“Additional performance information could include for example, the number of fire safety officers, their ranks (Grey/Green book) and qualifications; number of complaints received and dealt with; general risk profile of each FRS area”

“An ongoing challenge for (us) is being able to find comparable and meaningful bench marking data across public sector organisations. (We) would welcome the opportunity to work with Welsh Government, Wales Audit Office and other Improvement Authorities in developing a meaningful suite of comparative data sets to support continuous improve and sharing of good/best practice.”

We value responses to this question; we will continue to provide advice and support to FRAs on these issues through continuing and maintaining dialogue at the FRA Improvement Planning Steering group.

5.8 Question 8

General comments

Some respondents also provided more general comments in relation to issues not specifically addressed by questions 1 to 7 of the consultation form.

The comments provided in these responses included the following:

“Much of the data proposed to be removed will continue to be captured by (us). This will inform our decision making, resource allocation and management of proactive preventative work activities. Outcome based reporting against community safety activities remains a key function for FRA’s, and we would expect this data to support the core/local indicators.”

“We look forward to working with Welsh Government officials to finalise the details and compile clear guidance notes to support useful, unambiguous and consistent reporting. Evidently, statistical comparisons with previous years will not be possible in the first year of new or amended returns, so we would welcome advice from the Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Services department to support high quality data reporting.”

6. Conclusion

The majority of respondents were supportive of our proposals and the removal of several forms. The proposal for the removal of the some of the Human Resources forms (HRFW), Fire Safety forms (FSW) and some minor amendments to Operational forms (OPSW) were agreed.

Having weighed up all the views, the decision has been taken to implement the changes in this proposal for the 2014-15 collection. The existing Community Fires Safety Returns (FSRW) will apply for 2014-15 collection but new returns will be agreed shortly, which will then apply to the data collected for 2015-16.

A full breakdown of the amendments can be found at [Annex 2](#).

7. Annex 1 – Questions Asked

Name

E-Mail

Organisation

Organisation Type

Do you wish to be identified as the author of your response? (mandatory question)

Q1. Do you agree with the proposal to the following changes to the Human Resources HRFW Return:

- Remove 4 tables from HRFW relating to staff
- Merge table 81 into table 80 in regard to health and safety
- Remove 3 tables relating to Health and Safety
- Retain 3 tables with either no changes or with small changes to text or design
- Update the accompanying guidance notes

Q2. Do you agree with the proposal to remove the current Community Fire Safety FSRW Return and develop a new return:

- Replacement of current return with a new more focus return on HFSC and CYP Interventions

Q3. Do you agree with the proposal to the following changes to the Fire Safety FSW Return:

- Remove 1 table from FSW relating to activity
- Retain 2 tables with either no changes or with small changes to text or design
- Update the accompanying guidance notes

Q4. Do you agree with the proposal to the following changes to the Operational Statistics OPSW Return:

- Retain tables with either no changes or with small changes to text or design
- Update the accompanying guidance notes

Q5. What impact will the proposals have on your work?

Q6. Can you provide any reasons why these changes cannot be implemented for the 2014-15 data?

Q7. Is there any data that is not collected that you would like to see collected?

Q8. We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

8. Annex 2 – Specific Changes 2014-15 collection

The guidance has been reviewed and updated to take account the amendments made to the returns.

A breakdown of the specific changes for the 2014-15 collection is as follows:-

1. Human Resources (HRFW)

In relation to the Human Resources (HRFW) returns, the following changes will apply to the 2014-15 collection:

- **HRFW1 - Wholetime Posts**
 - Head Quarters/Division, Training, Fire Stations and Non-Operational columns have been removed.
 - Corporate, Operational and Fire Safety (Business and Community) columns have either been added or amended.
 - The Total column has an additional column added for Headcount.
- **HRFW2 - Retained Duty System Posts**
 - Title of the return has been amended to include wholetime staff who are on dual contracts to provide RDS cover.
 - A column has been added for total number of wholetime on a dual contract.
 - Total retained strength in numbers column has been amended to Total retained headcount in numbers.
- **HRFW3 - Fire Control Posts**
 - A column has been added to show headcount.
- **HRFW4a - Non-operational Posts and Strengths**
 - Head Quarters/Division, Training and Fire Stations columns have been removed, as well as the non-operational row.
 - Corporate and Fire Safety (Business and Community) columns have either been added or amended.
 - The Total column has an additional column added for Headcount.
 - Data is now broken down by grade.
- **HRFW86 – III-Health Retirements**
 - The breakdown between Injury award and No Injury award has been removed.

The following tables have merged:

- **HRFW80 - Health & Safety Operational Staff injuries during Operational and Training Incidents & HRFW81 - Injuries during training**
 - Title of the table has been changed to identify the return covers operational staff only.

- Fire, Special Service incidents and training incidents have been combined into 1 column.
- Fire control and non-operational staff columns have been removed.
- Number of 'over 7 day' injuries removed.
- Number of fatal injuries removed.
- Total normal duty days lost removed.
- Wholetime and day-crew rows combined.

The following return will remain unchanged for the 2014-15 collection:-

- **HRFW7 - Health & Safety Shifts / Days lost to sickness**

The following returns have been removed from the 2014-15 collection:-

- HRFW4b - Top 5 percent of earners
- HRFW10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16-17 - Wholetime, retained, control, non-operational (gender, age, ethnic origin)
- HRFW18-19, 20-21, 22-23, 24-25, 26-27, 28-29, 30-31, 32-33 – Recruitment and unsuccessful by gender and ethnicity
- HRFW34 – Retention
- HRFW82 – Injuries in routine activities
- HRFW83 – Vehicle accidents
- HRFW85 – Near misses

2. Fire Safety (FSW)

The following return will remain unchanged for the 2014-15 collection:

- **FSW1 – Audits and Outcomes**

The following returns have been removed from the 2014-15 collection:-

- **FSW2 – Other Enforcement activity**

3. Operational Statistics (OPSW)

In relation to the Operational Statistics (OPSW) returns, the following changes will apply to the 2014-15 collection:

- **OPSW11 – Fire Stations**
 - The returns have been revised to focus on identifying stations by shift pattern at a given point in time. Comparison of previous year's data will show changes over time rather than recording in year changes on the return.
 - All columns have been removed (Number at beginning of reporting period, closed and merged, new stations change of crewing system, number at end of reporting period).
 - The columns have been replaced with one identifying number as at set date (31 March). Duty System has been amended and broken down into: traditional wholetime, modified wholetime, RDS and voluntary.

The following return will remain unchanged for the 2014-15 data collection:

- **OPSW6 – Calls handled by fire control**

4. **Community Fire Safety (FSRW)**

COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY RETURN

For 2014-15 data collection, you should continue to use the current FSRW returns. The FSRW returns will be amended in due course to place a clearer focus on Home Fire Safety Checks and Children and Young People Interventions. FRA Officials are in the process of reviewing the data collection form with a view to new arrangements applying from 2015-16.

Annex 3 – List of responders

Name	Organisation
Group Manager, David Phillips	Mid & West Fire and Rescue Service
Swansea Command, Richard Davies	Mid & West Fire and Rescue Service
Head of SP&P, Steven McLinden	Mid & West Fire and Rescue Service
Corporate Planning Manager, Shan Morris	North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Head of SP&P, Steve Rossiter	South Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Andrew Tucker, Public Sector Outputs	Office of National Statistics

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