



South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue

WORKING FOR A SAFER
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

50 Ways We've Saved: Protecting The Frontline

March 2013



Foreword


As a publicly-funded organisation, people rightly expect South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue (SYFR) to use its resources responsibly and efficiently. Particularly in these times of Government budget cuts, the public, local politicians and our staff want to see that we are cutting spending where it is not needed, and protecting the frontline as much as possible.

The Government has stated how it believes fire services and local authorities can save money, both through announcements made by the Fire Minister, and the “50 ways to save” booklet published by the Department for Communities and Local Government, in December 2012. We believe we have been rising to this challenge since the funding cuts were announced in 2010, and shown how we are doing everything that should be expected of us in trying to share services with others, collaborating to save time and money, and stopping spending where it is not needed.

In fact, we believe we have gone further, in demonstrating genuine innovation, not only to cut our costs, but working with partners to actually improve some aspects of our service to the community whilst making savings.

We have made a concerted effort to cut costs in the ‘back office’, and have saved around £2 million to protect the frontline since 2010. Our total budget reduction in that time is around £7 million, reflecting the fact that we spend most of our money on firefighter costs. We will continue to seek ‘back office’ savings to protect the frontline as much as we can.

This austerity period looks set to run for some time to come. We will continue to innovate, and seek more ways to find savings, both on our own and in partnership with other organisations. We hope that this booklet shows we are leaving no stone unturned in our efforts to protect the frontline.



Some of our efficiencies to date including cash savings, and collaborations leading to service improvements and further savings.

Management and other staff savings

1. **Scrapping senior management posts:** we have removed four senior manager posts (over a quarter of the total posts) since 2010, one at director level. Our senior management team has reduced from 15 to 11, saving around £370,000 per year.
2. **Introduce a recruitment freeze:** support staff are no longer routinely replaced when they leave due to resignation or retirement. Replacements are only authorised upon submission of a detailed business case. As a result, of this recruitment freeze, and a restructure and voluntary redundancy process, our support staff numbers have reduced by 40 (around one-sixth) since 2010, saving over £500,000.
3. **Cut spending on recruitment:** our spending on recruitment has plummeted by 80%, reducing from around £130,000 to less than £20,000.
4. **Reduce sickness:** since we introduced a new sickness reporting procedure, our absenteeism levels have almost halved. In 2005, we averaged around 11 sickness days per person, per year. Our average sickness rate is now 6.25 days.

Procurement

5. **Use transparency to cut waste:** we were the first Fire and Rescue Service in the country to publish online data about all our items of expenditure over £500. We are additionally developing a project with Sheffield Hallam University students to assess other data we can make available, either for transparency purposes, or to be sold commercially.
6. **Retendering contracts:** we routinely put contracts out for retendering, achieving significant savings. For example, we are saving £12,000 per year by using a different supplier for scrap cars, which our firefighters use for road traffic collision training. And we saved over £8,000 by changing the supplier for our cleaning contract.
7. **Meeting refreshments:** we no longer routinely provide tea, coffee and biscuits at our meetings. Hot drinks are only provided dependent on the length of the meeting. Overall, incorporating all savings, our hospitality budget has reduced by £17,000.
8. **Mail run:** we ended our dedicated postal delivery run between our headquarters and other sites, saving £15,000 per year. We now instead combine the mail run with the weekly delivery each of our sites receives from our Stores.
9. **Rail travel:** where possible, we now book rail travel in advance and specify the train to be used, instead of buying 'open' tickets. In the first two years after this change, we saved £4,500.

10. **Corporate uniform:** we ended the provision of corporate clothing to our non-uniformed staff, saving around £17,000.
11. **Direct contract negotiation:** we saved over £32,000 on a contract for cutting equipment, used by firefighters at road traffic collisions, by dealing directly with the supplier instead of using a central contract.
12. **Water usage:** we've saved £11,000 per year on water and consumables by reducing the amount of vehicle washing taking place on fire stations.
13. **Electronic procurement tenders:** we've moved to an e-procurement system which means we no longer place newspaper adverts to highlight tender opportunities. This saved us £8,500 last year.
14. **Refuse collection:** since moving to a new headquarters, we've taken care to rationalise our waste disposal arrangements and promote recycling, and have reduced our refuse collection costs by £40,000.

Invest to save

15. **Recommissioning building heating and maintenance:** we've installed temperature sensors in the server rooms at our headquarters, saving £16,000 per year by achieving a 20% reduction in the need for room cooling.
16. **Voltage optimisation:** by using technology to optimise the amount of electricity used at our biggest sites, we're saving around £10,000 per year.
17. **Upgrading lighting systems:** we have started a programme of replacing all light fittings across our entire property system, which is expected to save around £30,000 per year (25% of our lighting costs) once the replacement programme is complete.
18. **Wireless metering:** using wireless technology, we now monitor energy usage at all our sites directly from headquarters. We are pinpointing areas which incur disproportionately high costs to enable us to make improvements.
19. **Further Invest to Save schemes:** in 2013, our Authority decided to increase its property maintenance programme to renew roofs, windows and mechanical equipment more quickly than had previously been planned, to reduce the need for more costly urgent repairs in the future.
20. **Sub-letting:** our reduction in the number of support staff has enabled us to rationalise office space at our Sheffield headquarters, freeing up a complete floor which we are seeking to let commercially.

Stopping or reducing other spending

21. **Annual awards ceremony:** we believe it is important to recognise and reward staff, public sector partners, and members of the community who help us to make

South Yorkshire safer, but we have removed the budget for our annual awards ceremony and now seek commercial partners to make this event self-funding.

22. **Don't translate documents into foreign languages:** we never translate any of our documents into foreign languages unless asked, apart from fire safety information which may be targeted at a specific community to reduce the likelihood and costs of responding to an emergency.
23. **Stop our community magazine:** we have stopped publishing our magazine, "Safety Watch", which was delivered to every household in South Yorkshire at a cost of £46,000. Instead, we send people who are interested in us a free monthly e-newsletter at a fraction of the cost.
24. **Save money on staff publications:** we have saved over £5,000 per year by stopping our quarterly staff magazine and halting the printing of our weekly staff newsletter. We have combined these important sources of staff information into one weekly publication, which is instead e-mailed out and placed on our intranet.
25. **End spending on media monitoring:** we terminated our media monitoring contract, saving £4,000 per year. Our media team has also started to generate income through a commercial agreement with a local news website, by publishing news about emergency incidents on their site.
26. **Member related costs:** our Authority members have achieved savings of £35,000 in the expenses they claim and other related costs on an annual basis.
27. **Reducing subscriptions:** our Authority has reduced its subscriptions to outside bodies such as the Local Government Association, saving £33,000.
28. **Insurance costs:** we have rationalised and retendered for our insurance provision, generating savings of £57,000 per year.
29. **Reduced internal costs:** our partners at the South Yorkshire Joint Secretariat have reviewed their costs for providing the Authority with services relating to legal, finance, member support and other governance issues, saving over £100,000.
30. **ICT contracts:** we have made savings of around £43,000 on contracts and licensing for our computer systems.
31. **Software licences:** we scrapped software we were using for performance management and developed an alternative system. We also downgraded other data software cover, making a total saving of £15,000.
32. **Training costs:** we've evaluated all our training courses for quality and value for money, enabling us to make savings of £393,000 in the training and development budget.
33. **Video conference instead of travel:** annual staff mileage claims have gone down by £5,000, partly as a result of the increased use of video conferencing.

34. **In-house systems:** by developing bespoke computer systems in-house, we have saved significant sums, whilst getting products that are tailored to our needs. For example, we had planned to spend £120,000 on an external system to manage our staff records and availability. Instead we have developed our own product, for a fraction of the costs.
35. **Review technology needs:** we carried out a review of all our allocated computers, mobile phones and smartphones, and saved £8,000 by cutting back to what was really needed.
36. **Ask staff for money-saving ideas:** our staff suggestion scheme has been extremely successful since it was relaunched in 2010. A simple suggestion by Technical Services staff of using a lubricant spray to loosen seized spindles on water hydrants, instead of automatically replacing them, has saved £26,000 in one year.

Collaboration and shared services

37. **Shared back office services:** we outsource the administration of our Firefighters' Pension scheme to West Yorkshire Pensions Fund. We have also been actively pursuing opportunities to share other back office services wherever possible. We now share a delivery driver with South Yorkshire Police (SYP), saving £18,000, and have taken part in further discussions with many other organisations about other services which could be shared, such as human resources and corporate communications. We have also collaborated with other Fire and Rescue Services to work together on community fire safety campaigns.

We will continue to proactively seek opportunities to share back office services with other organisations, whilst recognising that sharing can only take place if a suitable partner is found and the needs and interests of our frontline service delivery are protected in any sharing arrangement.

38. **Shared assets:** for many years we have allowed Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) to use Aston Park and Edlington fire stations as ambulance bases. We are in advanced discussions with South Yorkshire Police to enable them to use Rivelin fire station as a base for both operational police officers and a Neighbourhood Safety Team. We have also held discussions over the possibility of developing a joint emergency services site at our fire station in Stocksbridge.
39. **Shared operational response services:** we have sharing agreements in place with all our neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services over arrangements to support each other where an incident location makes this sensible. We have similar agreements to support each other in the eventuality of a major incident.

We work with our Yorkshire and Humberside colleagues to provide a regional Fire Investigation capability, and work closely with them in planning and responding to new threats such as prospective terrorist incidents and those involving hazardous materials.

We are also part of national Fire and Rescue Service response arrangements for major incidents such as flooding, providing support to each other.

40. **Collaboration on smoke alarm fitting:** we have formal partnership agreements in place with hundreds of local partners. Where appropriate, we have allowed them to carry out Home Safety Checks and fit free smoke alarms on our behalf. In these cases, the smoke alarms are paid for by SYFR but the partner organisation fits them as part of other services they offer. This reduces the number of visits which have to be made by our staff, and also benefits the resident, who only has to be visited by one organisation, instead of two.
41. **Collaborating to reduce emergency incidents:** we have a fire officer embedded within South Yorkshire Police, working as part of two anti-social behaviour teams specifically to reduce arson, which costs SYFR and society huge sums every year. We collaborate with many other partners to cut our emergency response costs by reducing the risk of arson and accidental fires. For example, we worked with Doncaster Council to carry out a controlled burn on a trail which had repeatedly been the subject of arson fires. And we have agreements with local authorities to clear away abandoned cars and nuisance rubbish before people can set fire to them.
42. **Collaborating to make people safer:** we have dozens of excellent partnerships which help us to improve the safety of some key people who may be at risk of fire. For example, we work with Barnardos Young Carers in Barnsley to give fire safety talks and ongoing support, to prevent house fires. We also work in partnership with the Barnsley Hospital Specialist Midwives team to identify and support women who may benefit from fire safety interventions.
43. **Collaborating to improve our work:** we have a strong relationship with Sheffield Hallam University through their 'Venture Matrix' programme. We identify projects which would benefit from the input of some academic research, and those ideas are matched against the needs of students who need to complete a project applying their academic studies to the workplace. Among the projects currently being undertaken are studies into smoke alarm ownership and testing, and the links between mental health and arson.
44. **Collaborating to break new ground:** we worked with the British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association, the Chief Fire Officers Association, Sheffield City Council and Sheffield Homes to complete the UK's first-ever 'retro-fit' sprinkler system. The sprinklers were fitted in the flats at Callow Mount, Sheffield, and will activate automatically in the event of a fire in a flat, keeping the occupant safe and minimising fire spread before the arrival of firefighters.
45. **Collaborating to get Lifewise:** Rotherham's Lifewise Centre is our unique collaboration with South Yorkshire Police, attended by thousands of school children and older people every year. It is a life-size film set of a small town which is used to deliver fire, road and personal safety messages to the public. It is entirely free to visitors, and is also the office location for community safety staff from both organisations, enabling them to share information on a daily basis.

46. **Shared Local Resilience Forum strategic co-ordinating centre (SCC):** we have made our Training and Development Centre available for use as South Yorkshire's SCC – the 'Gold' command location for major emergencies. We have created a bespoke computer network and designated space for partners such as the Police, Ambulance, Local Authorities and the Military to use in the event of such an incident.
47. **Shared Fire Control system:** we have joined up with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service to jointly procure a new control room system. Once installed in 2014, this will save us over £200,000 per year in annual service and maintenance costs. We will also save more money by completely removing our back-up control room, because West Yorkshire will provide our back-up support in the future, and vice-versa.
48. **Community budgets:** our Authority has allocated a fund of £2 million from its reserves for use by local communities on work to further reduce the number of emergencies we will have to attend in the future. Local authorities and neighbourhood level groups will be able to bid for funds to improve community safety in designated areas, reducing our operational response costs.

Income generation

49. **Sell services:** we provide commercial services through our training and development centre. In 2012, we provided firefighter training to a group of Qatari trainee firefighters; fire safety training to response staff at a local power station; and we were the base for the GB women's Olympic volleyball team.
50. **Extinguisher maintenance contracts:** we have won contracts to provide extinguisher maintenance services for Rotherham and Barnsley Councils, Sheffield Hospitals, and further education establishments across South Yorkshire.