

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE MATTERS

A PARLIAMENTARY BULLETIN FROM THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION | SEPTEMBER 2019



FIREFIGHTER JOBS SEE A SLIGHT INCREASE AFTER YEARS OF CUTS

OVERVIEW

For the first time in a decade there has been a small increase in the number of firefighters - a marginal 1% rise, according to new figures obtained by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). There was an increase of 300 frontline firefighter jobs, after a decade of drastic cuts.

Since the Tory-led governments came into office in 2010, 11,500 frontline firefighter jobs have been cut. This is now almost one-in-five (19%) of the total firefighting force over this period. Almost one thousand firefighter jobs have been cut in Scotland since 2010. In Wales nearly 600 jobs have gone, while lack of recruitment in Northern Ireland has seen a reduction of over 200 firefighter jobs.

Two years on from the Grenfell tower disaster, firefighter job growth is anaemic and the fire and rescue service still lacks the investment it so desperately needs.

SLIGHT INCREASES

In Scotland there was an increase of 197 firefighters, in part due to the VAT refund. London saw 185 firefighters added in the year. The North West saw a small increase in firefighters: Greater Manchester added 79 wholtime firefighters; Lancashire increased their retained firefighters by 6% and Merseyside saw them increase their retained firefighters by a quarter but removed 21 wholtime firefighter posts. But, this comes after a reduction of 1,250 North West firefighter posts since 2010. A similar pattern occurred in Kent with a 10% increase in retained firefighters and decrease of 11 wholtime firefighter posts.

In Northern Ireland there was an overall decrease in firefighters - 4%, in large part being a reduction of 76 retained firefighters. Wales saw a 1% decrease from the previous year, although this differed across brigades, with South Wales being hardest hit - a reduction of 27 wholtime firefighter posts.

JOBS STILL DOWN

There was an increase of 250 wholtime firefighter posts overall, but the picture in certain parts of the country wasn't as rosy, with fire and rescue services such as Hampshire, Merseyside and South Wales being hardest hit. However brigades such as Gloucestershire, Isle of Wight, Lincolnshire, Northumberland, and North Wales lost proportionately high numbers of wholtime firefighters. Overall wholtime firefighter numbers fell in Wales and Northern Ireland.

Retained firefighter numbers fell in a number of brigades, notably Avon, Dorset and Wiltshire and Northern Ireland. Control jobs rose slightly, after many years of drastic cuts. However, the South West was hard hit with Devon and Somerset and Gloucestershire seeing a decrease in control posts of 12% and 10% respectively. Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service have not provided 2019 figures after numerous requests - their figures have therefore been held constant.

FIREFIGHTER JOBS SINCE 2010

Around 8,000 of the cuts since 2010 are to wholtime firefighters, while 3,000 retained firefighters have also been cut. Around a quarter of control staff, who take the emergency calls and mobilise fire crews, have been lost.

Funding for the fire and rescue service in England is made up of central funding from Westminster and locally raised revenue from councils. This is split roughly 50:50 for England as a whole, but with varying proportions in different brigades.

Fire and rescue spending increased roughly in line with inflation until 2010, but after that a real funding gap has emerged. In 2017-18 this gap stood at 38%. Fire spending simply hasn't kept up with inflation, indicating the severe scale of cuts over the severe scale of cuts over the austerity period.

Jobs by brigade 2010-19 and 2018-19

Fire and Rescue Service	Firefighters change 2010 to 2019	Firefighters change 2010 to 2019 (%)	Firefighters change 2018 to 2019	Firefighters change 2018 to 2019 (%)
Scotland	-917	-12%	197	3%
Northern Ireland	-204	-10%	-82	-4%
Mid and West Wales	-32	-3%	11	1%
North Wales	-144	-16%	-2	0%
South Wales	-402	-24%	-29	-2%
Wales	-578	-15%	-20	-1%
Cleveland	-196	-31%	-17	-4%
Durham	-80	-14%	-12	-2%
Northumberland	-131	-30%	-16	-5%
Tyne and Wear	-292	-31%	-	0%
Humberside	-188	-18%	20	2%
North Yorkshire	-113	-15%	-16	-2%
South Yorkshire	-255	-27%	22	3%
West Yorkshire	-594	-35%	-7	-1%
Cheshire	-74	-10%	1	0%
Cumbria	-156	-21%	14	2%
Greater Manchester	-624	-31%	76	6%
Lancashire	-263	-20%	51	5%
Merseyside	-367	-30%	21	3%
North West Fire Control	N/A	N/A	6	10%
Derbyshire	-75	-10%	8	1%
Leicestershire	-210	-26%	1	0%
Lincolnshire	-136	-18%	-28	-4%
Northamptonshire	-115	-20%	9	2%
Nottinghamshire	-232	-24%	1	0%
Hereford and Worcester	-99	-14%	-15	-2%
Shropshire	-42	-7%	-2	0%
Staffordshire	-276	-30%	36	6%
Warwickshire	-60	-13%	-19	-5%
West Midlands	-465	-24%	-9	-1%
Bedfordshire	-46	-9%	10	2%
Cambridgeshire	-158	-23%	3	1%
Essex	-250	-18%	10	1%
Hertfordshire	-131	-16%	-11	-2%
Norfolk	-108	-13%	-10	-1%
Suffolk	-178	-23%	2	0%
London	-1,111	-18%	185	4%
Berkshire	-88	-15%	-4	-1%
Buckinghamshire	-266	-43%	-16	-4%
East Sussex	-100	-14%	-9	-1%
Hampshire	-220	-14%	-18	-1%
Isle of Wight	-53	-24%	-3	-2%
Kent	-462	-28%	37	3%
Oxfordshire	-77	-12%	13	2%
Surrey	-135	-18%	-7	-1%
West Sussex	-224	-27%	7	1%
Avon	-287	-30%	-46	-6%
Cornwall	-37	-6%	7	1%
Devon and Somerset	-513	-25%	-23	-1%
Dorset and Wiltshire	-258	-20%	-37	-3%
Gloucestershire	-88	-17%	8	2%
England	-9,769	-21%	223	1%
UK Total	-11,468	-19%	318	1%

Source: FBU Freedom of Information requests April-August 2019. Provisional headcount figures on 31 March each year