



Home Office

# Fire prevention and protection statistics: England, April 2016 to March 2017

Statistical Bulletin 19/17

26 October 2017

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# 1 Key facts

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This release presents statistics which cover the financial year 2016/17 (1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017) for fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) in England. The results show:

## Fire prevention:

- Overall the number of Home Fire Risk Checks (HFRCs) that FRAs and their partners carry out have been on a **downwards trend although there was a small increase between 2015/16 and 2016/17**. In 2016/17, **FRAs completed 590,198 HFRCs**, this was a two per cent increase compared with the previous year (581,364) and 24 per cent fewer than in 2010/11 (775,019). **Partners carried out 26,677 HFRCs** which was 40 per cent fewer compared with 2015/16 (44,388) and 47 per cent fewer compared with 2010/11 (50,105).
- Although the number of HFRCs has been declining, the number **of targeted visits has fluctuated** but has **increased over the last two years**. Of the 590,198 HFRCs completed in 2016/17, 53 per cent were targeted towards the elderly and 24 per cent were targeted towards the disabled.
- Overall since 2010/11 the number of campaigns and initiatives and hours spent on campaigns and initiatives show **no clear trend and appear to fluctuate year on year**. In 2016/17 FRAs completed **145,689 campaigns and initiatives visits** which was a two per cent increase compared with 2015/16 (142,758) and eight per cent fewer compared with 2010/11 (157,636).

## Fire protection:

- There has been a **decline in the number of fire safety audits that FRAs complete** however this **figure has fluctuated** in the past two years. FRAs carried out **54,247 fire safety audits in 2016/17** which accounted for four per cent of premises known to the authorities and was 14 per cent fewer than in 2015/16 (63,201) and 36 per cent fewer than in 2010/11 (84,575).
- In 2016/17 the **majority (68%) of fire safety audits were satisfactory**, similar to the previous year.
- In 2016/17 the highest proportion of fire safety audits were carried out on **shop premises** (20% or 10,880), followed by **care homes** (14% or 7,391) and **licensed premises** (13% or 6,867).
- In 2016/17 FRAs carried out **51,259 building regulation consultations**, this amounted to 100,643 hours. Similarly to fire safety audits, the highest proportion (22%) of building regulation consultations were on shop premises.

## 2 Introduction

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In order to improve the clarity of the Home Office's fire statistics some of the previous releases have been replaced by more topic-focussed publications. This is one of the new publications and brings together statistics on fire prevention and protection which were previously released in the [Fire and rescue authorities: operational statistics bulletin for England 2015 to 2016](#) and Fire Statistics England.<sup>1</sup> This publication covers smoke alarm ownership, Home Fire Risk Checks, campaigns and initiatives undertaken by fire and rescue services, fire safety audits and building regulation consultations.

Another new publication which includes information previously in the operational statistics publication has been published on the same day: [Fire and rescue workforce and pension statistics: England, April 2016 to March 2017](#). This includes statistics on total workforce and leavers, workforce diversity, firefighter health and safety and firefighter pensions.

Information on prevention and protection activity is recorded by individual fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) and provided annually to the Home Office through a manual collection via excel spreadsheets.

Data from the [English Housing Survey](#) on smoke alarm ownership are also presented here.

This publication is accompanied by reference data tables. All fire statistics tables can be found at:

[www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables)

The following tables have been produced as part of this publication:

Fire prevention and protection [1201, 1202 and 1203 and the supporting table 1204](#).

### **Improving Fire Prevention and Protection Statistics:**

If you have any comments on any of the statistics or the presentation in this release, please contact us at:

Email: [FireStatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FireStatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> Fire Statistics: England has been replaced by Detailed analysis of fires attended by fire and rescue services, England. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/detailed-analysis-of-fires-attended-by-fire-and-rescue-services-england-april-2016-to-march-2017>

## 3 Fire prevention

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Fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) undertake prevention activities which provide information and advice and aims to encourage fire safety behaviours and educate people on the steps to be taken to prevent the occurrence of a fire and increase the survivability when involved in a fire. This section focuses on smoke alarm ownership, Home Fire Risk Checks and campaigns and initiatives.

### Smoke alarm ownership

#### Box 1: Smoke alarm ownership data collection

Data on the proportion of households with a smoke alarm have been collected since the 1980s from a variety of sources and data on ownership of a **working** smoke alarm have been collected from 2001. Since 2008/09 the English Housing Survey<sup>2</sup> (EHS) has been the primary source of information on smoke alarm ownership. The exact questions asked change each year but have previously included ownership of a smoke alarm, ownership of a working smoke alarm, smoke alarm testing habits and carbon monoxide alarm ownership.

Data on smoke alarm ownership have previously been published in Fire Statistics: England. Data for 2015/16 were published in the last iteration of that publication and are included here for completeness; updates will be included in future Fire Statistics releases.<sup>3</sup>

The latest available data show that in 2015/16, 89 per cent of households owned a **working** smoke alarm, a one per cent increase compared with 2014/15 and an increase of 13 per cent since 2001 (the earliest date for which these data are available). In 2014/15 when the question was last asked, 93 per cent of households reported owning a smoke alarm compared with 88 per cent that reported having a **working** smoke alarm in the same year.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 3.1 shows the sharp increase in smoke alarm ownership which occurred during the 1990s and the steady increase in smoke alarm ownership and **working** smoke alarm ownership thereafter.

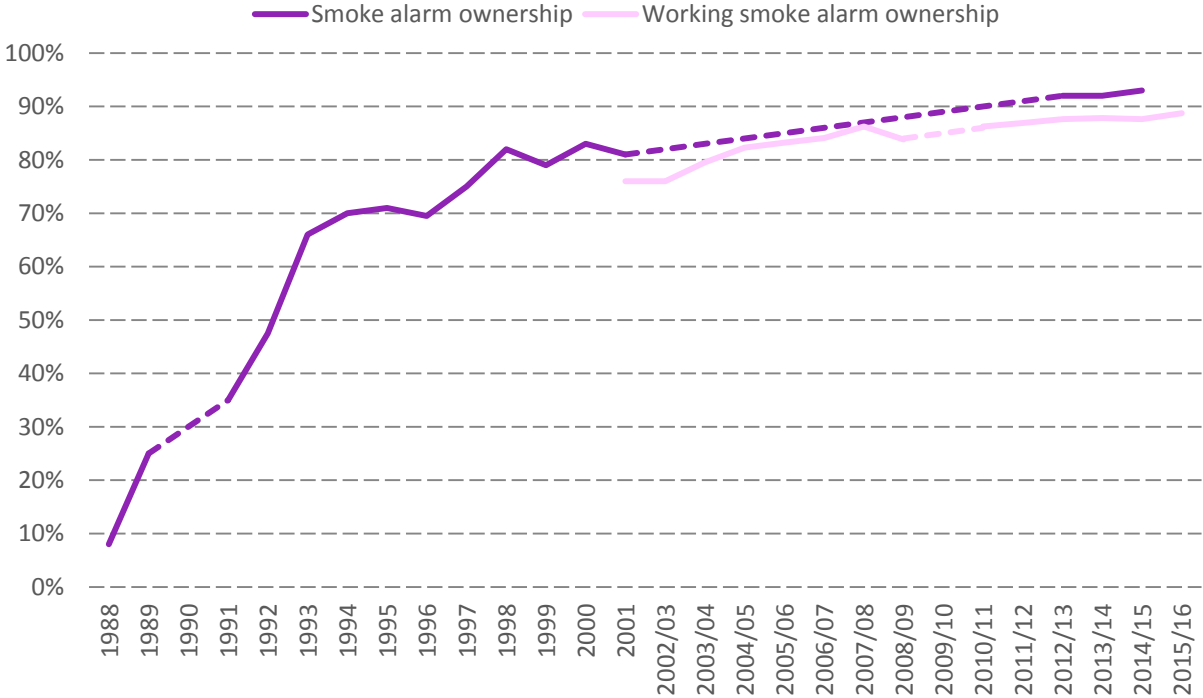
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<sup>2</sup> English Housing Survey, DCLG. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>

<sup>3</sup> The next headline figures from the English Housing Survey published by DCLG are likely to be available in early 2018.

<sup>4</sup> For more detail on the increasing smoke alarm ownership see Home Office (2017) Focus on trends in fires and fire-related fatalities. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/650869/focus-trends-fires-fatalities-oct17.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/650869/focus-trends-fires-fatalities-oct17.pdf)

**Figure 3.1 Percentage of households owning a smoke alarm or working smoke alarm, England & Wales or England, 1988 to 2015/16**



Source: FIRE0701

Previous analysis of the EHS data has shown that the types of households most likely to own a smoke alarm are those living in properties built after 1980, those who are social renters (both local authority and housing association renters), and those households made up of couples with children. Private renters are least likely to own a working smoke alarm.<sup>5</sup>

Information about all incidents attended by FRAs are recorded on the Home Office Incident Recording System (IRS) and this includes the presence and operation of smoke alarms at fires. Between 2010/11 and 2016/17 the highest proportion of fatalities occurred when there was no smoke alarm present.<sup>6</sup>

[Further information on smoke alarm ownership can be found in fire data table 0701.](#)

<sup>5</sup> DCLG (2015) Smoke alarms in English Homes report, using EHS data. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/539096/Smoke\\_Alarms\\_in\\_English\\_Homes\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/539096/Smoke_Alarms_in_English_Homes_Full_Report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> For more detailed information on the function of smoke alarms in fires recorded by the IRS please see the statistical release: Detailed analysis of fires attended by fire and rescue services, England, April 2016 to March 2017. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/detailed-analysis-of-fires-attended-by-fire-and-rescue-services-england-april-2016-to-march-2017>

FRAs have been conducting fire prevention work for a number of years and in a number of different areas. This work became a statutory duty for FRAs in 2004 with the introduction of the Fire and Rescue Services Act.<sup>7</sup> Typical activities include: Home Fire Risk Checks (HFRCs), arson prevention, promotional work with young people and other vulnerable groups as well as other campaigns and initiatives.

It should be noted that FRAs carry out a wide range of prevention and protection activities and it is likely that data collected by the Home Office do not capture the breadth of all preventative activities that FRAs undertake.

## Home Fire Risk Checks (HFRCs)

HFRCs are often targeted towards the more vulnerable members of the community, including older people and those with disabilities, and aim to offer bespoke fire safety advice based on their household and lifestyle which can mitigate the risk of fire. These visits can result in the installation of smoke alarms and safety recommendations such as moving furniture which may be hazardous.<sup>8</sup>

The Home Office collects data on the number of HFRCs that FRAs carry out and the number of personnel hours spent on HFRCs. At a national level, the number of HFRCs that FRAs complete has been declining since 2010/11 (when records began), though it slightly increased between 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Specifically:

- In 2016/17, **FRAs completed 590,198 HFRCs**. This was a two per cent increase compared with the previous year (581,364) and 24 per cent fewer than in 2010/11 (775,019).
- The number of hours **FRAs spent on HFRCs in 2016/17 totalled 881,291**, this was a 21 per cent increase compared with the previous year (729,662) however 11 per cent fewer than in 2010/11 (984,787).
- The **average personnel time spent at a HFRC was 1 hour and 30 minutes in 2016/17**, approximately 15 minutes longer than in 2015/16.

The Home Office also collects data on the number of HFRCs targeted at the elderly (age 65 and over) and the disabled. It should be noted that these two groups are not mutually exclusive; therefore double counting occurs between categories.

Although overall the number of HFRCs that FRAs undertake has been declining, the number of targeted visits has fluctuated but has increased over the last two years. In 2016/17, over 310,000 (53%) HFRCs were targeted towards the elderly and over 140,000 (24%) were targeted towards the disabled.

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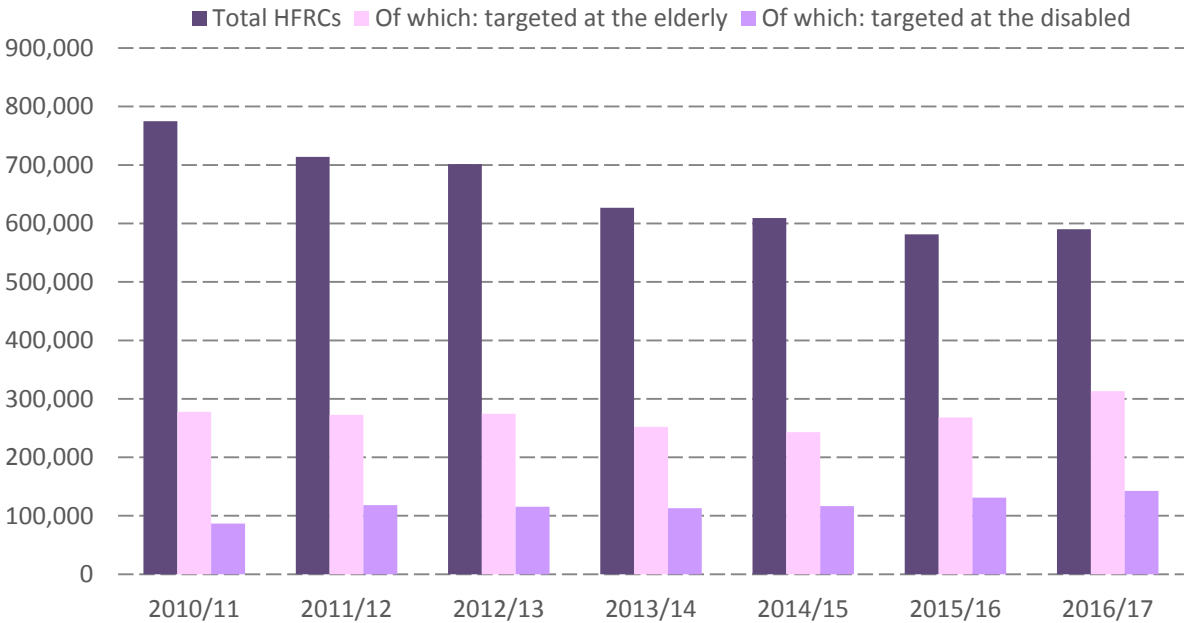
<sup>7</sup> Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents>

<sup>8</sup> For more detailed definitions, see the Fire Statistics Definitions document . Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-prevention-and-protection-statistics>

Specifically:

- In 2016/17, FRAs completed **313,130 HFRCs targeted towards the elderly**. This was a 17 per cent increase compared with 2015/16 (268,176) and a 13 per cent increase compared with 2010/11 (277,773).
- **438,459 hours were spent on HFRCs targeted towards the elderly in 2016/17**, this was a 37 per cent increase since 2015/16 (319,566) and a 28 per cent increase since 2010/11 (342,072).
- In 2016/17 FRAs completed **142,472 HFRCs targeted towards disabled people**, this was a nine per cent increase compared with 2015/16 (130,971) and a 65 per cent increase since 2010/11 (86,570).
- In 2016/17 **250,280 hours were spent on HFRCs targeted at the disabled** which was a 37 per cent increase compared with 2015/16 (182,969) and a 122 per cent increase compared with 2010/11 (112,731).

**Figure 3.2 Total numbers of HFRCs and targeted HFRCs completed by FRAs, England, 2010/11 to 2016/17**



Source: Table FIRE1201

FRAs also work with local external partners to carry out HFRCs on their behalf. Examples of external partners could include social services, the voluntary sector or housing authorities. Overall the number of HFRCs that partners carry out has declined since 2010/11; however there is some fluctuation year on year.

Specifically:

- In 2016/17 **partners carried out 26,677 HFRCs** which was 40 per cent fewer compared with 2015/16 (44,388) and 47 per cent fewer compared with 2010/11 (50,105).



- Partners spent **27,569 hours completing HFRCs** in 2016/17 and this was 59 per cent fewer compared with 2015/16 (67,055) and 35 per cent fewer compared with 2010/11(42,705).
- In 2016/17 **the average personnel time spent at a HFRC completed by a partner was approximately 1 hour and 2 minutes**. This was approximately 28 minutes shorter compared with the previous year, however since 2010/11 this figure has fluctuated year on year.

[Further information on HFRCs, and at individual FRA level, can be found in fire data table 1201.](#)

## Campaigns and Initiatives

FRAs undertake a broad range of campaigns and initiatives aimed at preventing fires. The Home Office collects data on the total number of campaigns and initiatives visits and personnel hours and specifically about the following schemes:

- **Fire-setter and anti-social behavioural schemes and other youth diversion** - Youth initiatives designed to tackle and prevent fire-setting behaviour, involving a one-to-one intervention or targeting groups of young people who have been identified as at risk of offending, specifically arson and other youth diversion schemes, such as Local Intervention Fire Education (LIFE).<sup>9</sup>
- **Other youth schemes** - Other youth fire safety programmes include information on FRA involvement with schools, including visits to fire stations or school talks.

It should be noted that FRAs carry out a broad range of schemes and initiatives and breakdowns are only collected for the specific categories mentioned above. Some campaigns and initiatives may not directly fit into any one category, therefore the specific schemes that are categorised are not mutually exclusive to each other and double counting may occur. Furthermore, schemes may vary between FRAs. Consequently the data that are collected are useful as indicative figures on numbers of campaigns and initiative visits however may not be useful for direct comparisons between FRAs or for further analysis.

Overall since 2010/11 the number of campaigns and initiatives and hours spent on campaigns and initiatives show no clear trend and appear to fluctuate year on year.

Specifically:

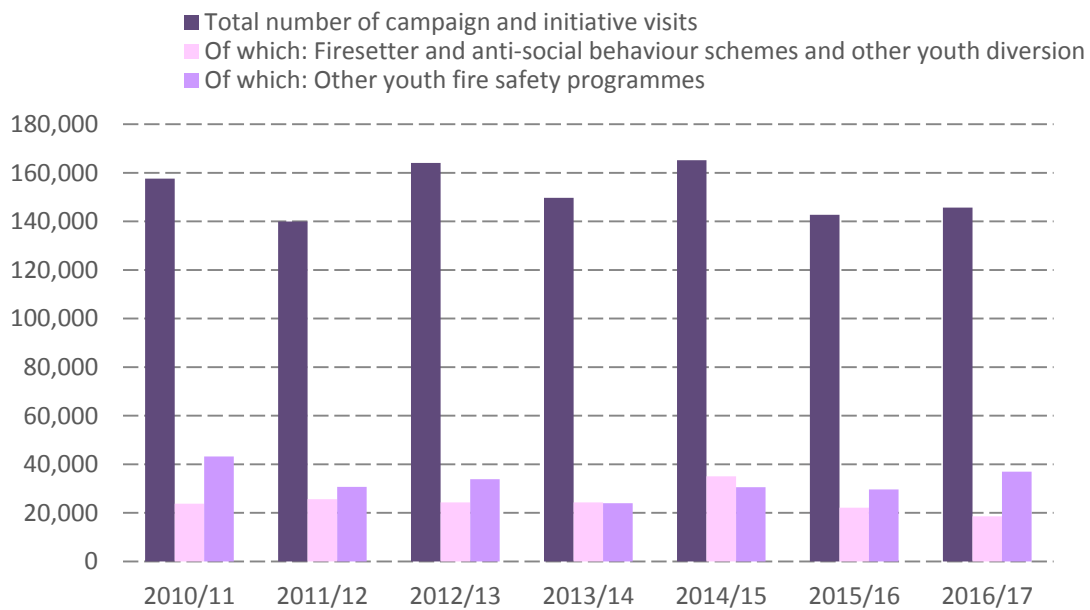
- In 2016/17 FRAs completed **145,689 campaigns and initiative visits** which was a two per cent increase compared with 2015/16 (142,758) and eight per cent fewer compared with 2010/11 (157,636).

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<sup>9</sup>Information on LIFE courses available at: <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/life.asp>.

- In 2016/17 **618,953 hours were spent by FRAs completing campaigns and initiatives** visits which was a two per cent increase compared with 2015/16 (605,428) and 11 per cent fewer compared with 2010/11 (693,731).
- In 2016/17 the **average personnel time spent at** campaigns and initiatives visits was approximately **4 hours and 15 minutes**, similar to that in 2015/16 (4 hours 14 minutes) and 2010/11 (4 hours and 24 minutes).

**Figure 3.3 Total numbers of fire and rescue service campaigns and initiatives visits and specific campaigns and initiatives visits completed by FRAs, England, 2010/11 to 2016/17**



Source: FIRE1203

[Further information on campaigns and initiatives, and at individual FRA level, can be found in fire data table 1203.](#)

## 4 Fire protection

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Fire protection refers to FRA's statutory role in ensuring public safety in the wider built environment, and involves auditing, and where necessary, enforcing regulatory compliance, primarily, but not exclusively, in respect of the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO).<sup>10</sup> This section of the release specifically focuses on fire safety audits, short audits and building regulation consultations.

### Fire Safety Audits

#### Box 2: Details of fire safety audits

A fire safety audit is a planned visit by a FRA to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the level of compliance with the requirements of the FSO in a particular premise. The FSO requires a 'responsible person' for a workplace or premises, to which the public have access, to carry out and regularly review a fire risk assessment to ensure that the general fire precautions are adequate and appropriate, to reduce the risk from fire to employees and other relevant persons to as low as reasonably practicable. The FSO applies to the majority of non-domestic premises, including to the communal areas in residential buildings.

It is a matter for FRAs to determine how many audits they carry out per year but they must have a locally determined risk based inspection programme and management strategy in place for enforcing the FSO.

#### Number of fire safety audits

Data collected by the Home Office for 2016/17 (covering up to the end of March 2017<sup>11</sup>) from FRAs shows that since 2010/11 there has been a decline in the number of fire safety audits that FRAs complete and numbers have fluctuated over the past couple of years. The highest proportion of fire safety audits were on shop premises for all years on record between 2011/12 and 2016/17.<sup>12</sup>

Specifically:

- FRAs carried out **54,247 fire safety audits** in 2016/17, which accounted for four per cent of premises known to the authorities.<sup>13</sup> This figure was 14 per cent fewer than in 2015/16 (63,201) and 36 per cent fewer than in 2010/11 (84,575).

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<sup>10</sup> The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/1541/contents/made>

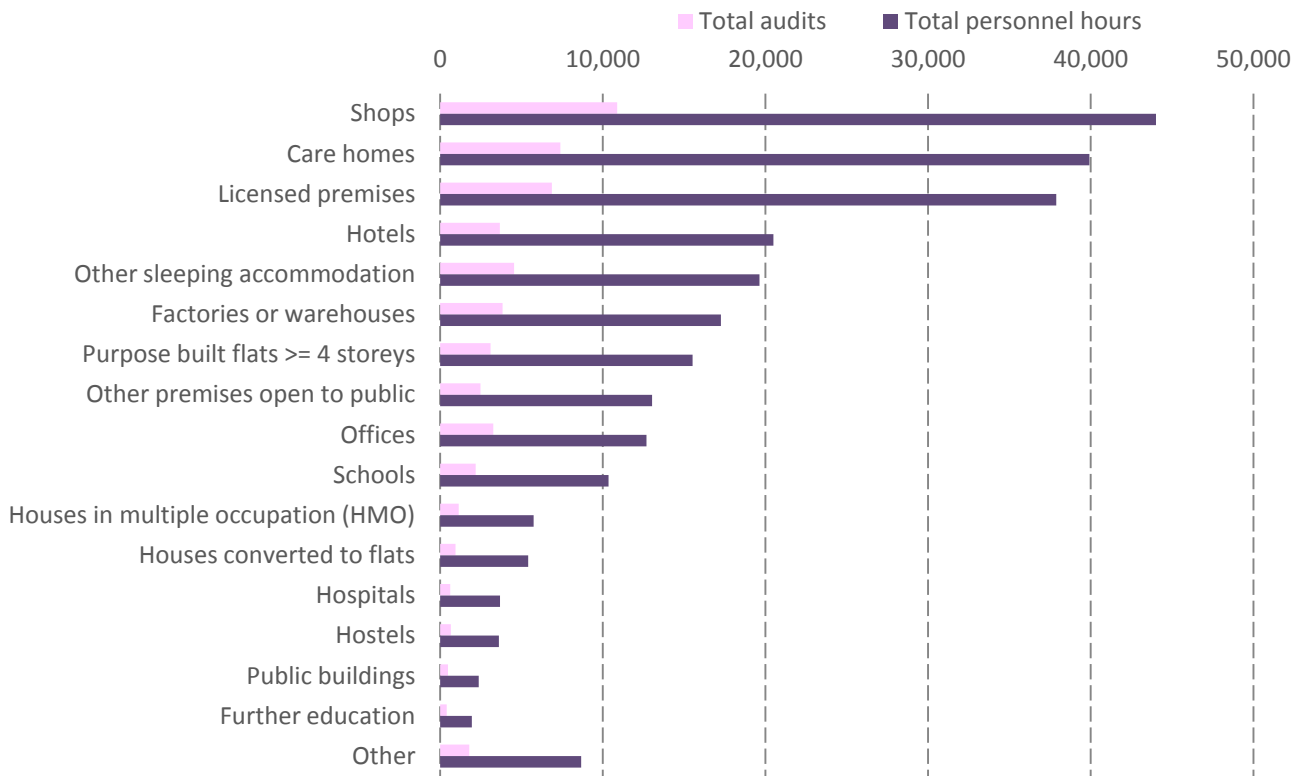
<sup>11</sup> After the tragic event at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017, there was increased fire service inspection activity towards purpose built and high-rise flats. This statistical release covers the period up to 31 March 2017 and therefore these inspections will be captured in the release for the reporting year 2017/18.

<sup>12</sup> These data were not published for the year 2015/16.

<sup>13</sup> Premises known to authorities are the number of relevant premises known to the enforcing authority and listed in its fire safety database.

- In 2016/17 the **highest proportion** of fire safety audits were carried out on **shop premises** (20% or 10,880), followed by care homes (14% or 7,391) and licensed premises (13% or 6,867).

**Figure 4.1 Total number and number of personnel hours spent on fire safety audits by FRAs, by type of building, England, 2016/17**



Source: FIRE1204

### Outcome of fire safety audits

When a fire safety audit is completed the result is categorised as either satisfactory, when no further action is taken, or unsatisfactory, when the responsible person is non-compliant with the FSO. When an outcome is unsatisfactory and the risk to relevant persons is not significant and the responsible person is willing to comply, agreed action plans known as informal notifications may be issued instead of formal enforcement notice procedures.

Formal notifications are issued in the most serious of cases where less formal action has failed to resolve issues of non-compliance. These are categorised within the FSO as:

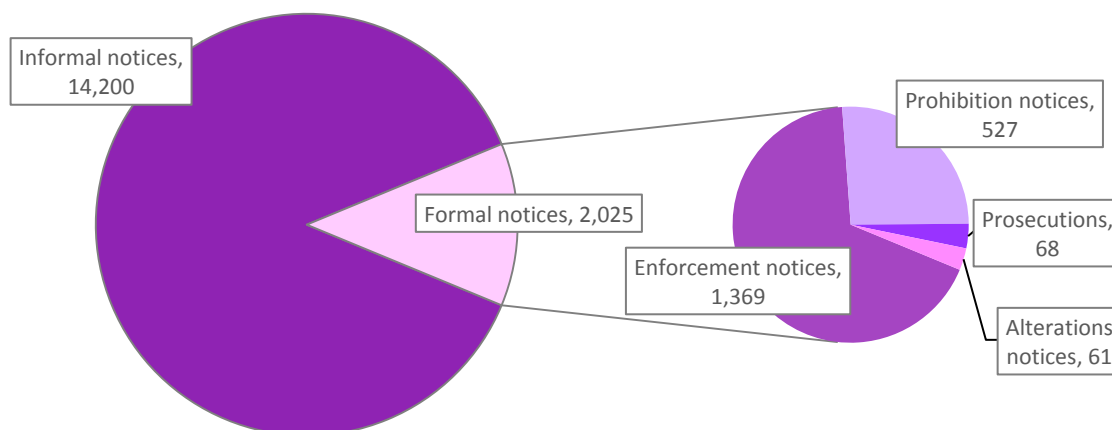
<b>Box 3: Details of formal notifications</b>	
<b>Enforcement notices (Article 30)</b>	These are served if the enforcing authority is of the opinion that the responsible person has failed to comply with any provision of the FSO or of any regulations made under it.
<b>Prohibition notices (Article 31)</b>	These are served on the responsible person or any other person, if the enforcing authority is of the opinion that use of premises involves or will involve a risk to relevant persons so serious that use of the premises ought to be prohibited or restricted.
<b>Alteration notices (Article 29)</b>	These are served on the responsible person if the enforcing authority is of the opinion that the premises constitutes a serious risk to relevant persons (whether due to the features of the premises, their use, any hazard present, or any other circumstances); or may constitute such a risk if a change is made to them or the use to which they are put.
<b>Prosecutions (Article 32)</b>	These are the number of convictions for failure to comply with an alteration, enforcement or prohibition notice, or any other matter for which it is an offence under Article 32.

In 2016/17 the majority (around 37,000 or 68%) of fire safety audits were satisfactory and the remainder (17,000, 32%) were unsatisfactory. These proportions were similar to the previous year.

Specifically:

- In 2016/17 there were 54,247 fire safety audits and **37,096 (68%) were deemed satisfactory**. This compares with 63,201 audits in 2015/16, of which 43,705 (69%) were deemed satisfactory.
- There were 17,151 unsatisfactory fire safety audits in 2016/17 and this resulted in **14,200 informal notifications** (compared with 14,469 informal notifications in 2015/16) and **2,025 formal notices**.
- Formal notices included; **1,369 enforcement notices, 527 prohibition, 61 alteration notices** and **68 prosecutions**.
- In 2016/17 the most common article of non-compliance to the FSO resulting in action of any type (excluding prosecutions) in England was **Article 4 (Emergency route and exits)** accounting for **7,250 instances (15%)** of non-compliance.
- In 2016/17 **3,332** were reported as **satisfactory following enforcement** action.

**Figure 4.2 Fire safety notices resulting from unsatisfactory fire safety audits (informal and formal) issued in England, 2016/17**



Source: FIRE1202

### Short Audits (experimental statistics)

In 2016/17, for the first time, the Home Office collected data from FRAs on the number of short audits that they complete. The data were collected on a voluntary basis and are only indicative of the national picture as only eleven out of 45 FRAs provided data.<sup>14</sup> Due to the small number of responses these data are considered experimental statistics at present. Experimental statistics are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage. The Home Office proposes to make this collection mandatory in 2017/18.

Since 2016 FRAs have had the option of using the Chief Fire Officers Association's<sup>15</sup> short audit form, designed to support the principles of better regulation and allow FRAs to focus their enforcement resources more effectively on higher risk premises. Collecting data on the number of short audits enables greater understanding of the protection work that FRAs undertake.

- In 2016/17, the eleven FRAs that provided data carried out **4,871 short audits**. This represents **33 per cent** of the total number of audits that were completed by these eleven FRAs who provided data. The highest proportion of the short audits recorded (17% or 814) were on **care homes**.

[Further information on fire safety audits, and for individual FRAs, can be found in fire data tables 1202 and 1204.](#)

<sup>14</sup> This may be because current IT systems are unable to capture information on short audits or that the FRA does not currently undertake short audits.

<sup>15</sup> Chief Fire Officers Association's short audit form. Available at: <http://www.cfoa.org.uk/19802>

## Building regulation consultations and other fire safety activity

FRA's also provide data on the number of consultations received under Building Regulations; and any other fire safety activities they undertake to support business understanding of, and compliance with, the FSO.

Building regulation consultations are statutory consultations with FRA's by building control bodies under articles 45 and 46 of the FSO.

- In 2016/17 FRA's carried out **51,259 building regulation consultations**, this was a total of **100,643 hours**. Similarly to fire safety audits, the highest proportion (22%) of building regulation consultations were on shops. Figure 4.2 shows greater detail of the number of building regulation consultations.

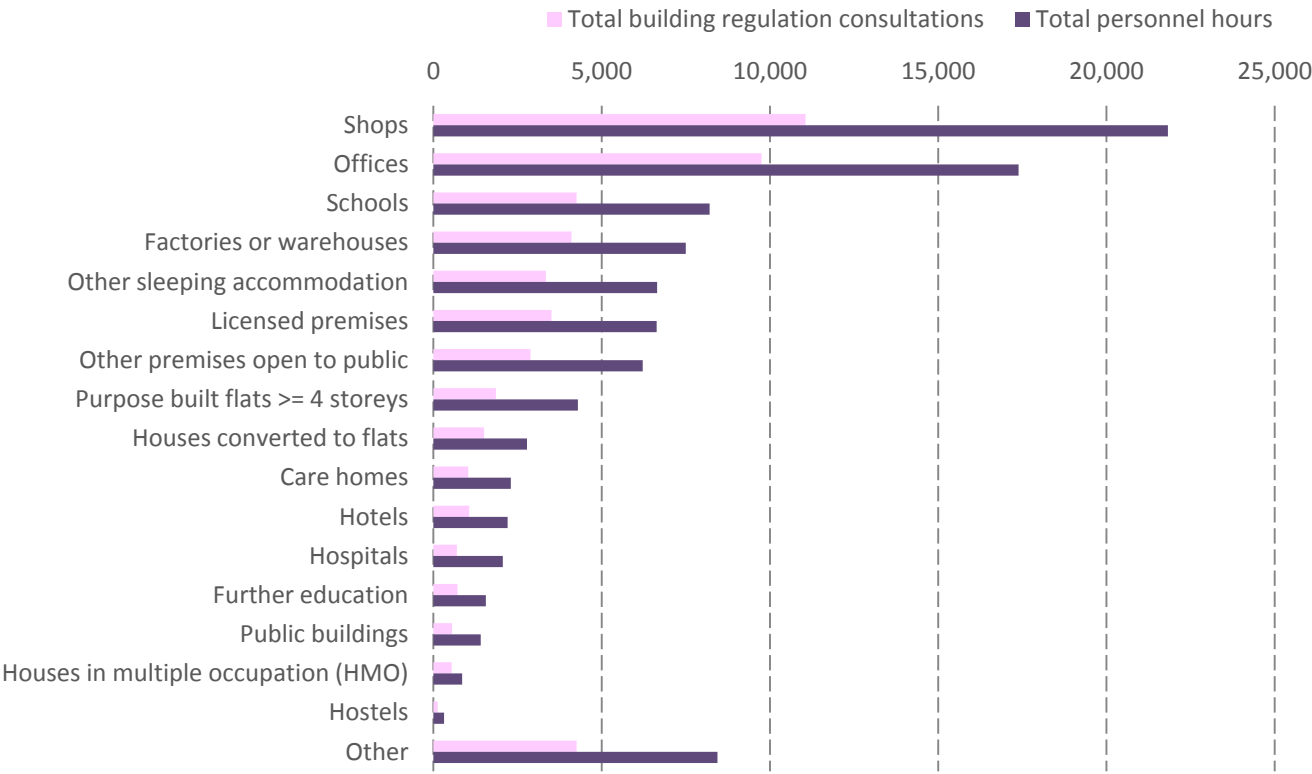
Other fire safety activities include those generated by requests from others, i.e. approaches from other agencies or bodies, the public, and business representatives as well as any FSO related promotional/awareness raising activities generated within the FRA. These activities are not statutory consultations under the FSO.

- FRA's carried out **81,280 other fire safety activities** in 2016/17, which was a total of **133,847 hours**.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Data are also collected on enforcement activities under other legislations: Petroleum (Consolidation) Act 2014/Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002 (DSEAR) and Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations 2005/ DSEAR. See FIRE1204 for further details.

**Figure 4.3 Total numbers and number of personnel hours spent on Building Regulation consultations completed by FRAs, by type of building, England, 2016/17**



Source: FIRE1204

[Further information on building regulations and other fire safety activities available in fire table 1204.](#)



## 5 Further information

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This release contains administrative statistics about prevention and protection activities carried out by fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) in England. This publication also draws from other sources such as the English Housing Survey and from the Home Office's online Incident Recording System (IRS), which allows FRAs to complete an incident form for every incident attended, be it a fire, a false alarm or a non-fire (sometimes known as Special Service) incident. The online IRS was introduced in April 2009. Previously paper forms were submitted by FRAs and an element of sampling was involved in the data compilation process.

Guidance for using these statistics and other fire statistics publications can be found on or via the fire statistics collection page

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-statistics)

This publication is accompanied by reference data tables. All the fire statistics tables can be found at

[www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables)

### Improving fire prevention and protection statistics

If you have any comments on any of the statistics or presentation in this release, especially on the Experimental Statistics on short audits please contact us on Email:

[FireStatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FireStatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

The information published in this release is kept under review, taking into account the needs of users, burdens on suppliers and producers, in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. If you have any comments, suggestions or enquiries, please contact the team via email using [firestatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:firestatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk) or via the user feedback form on the [fire statistics collection page](#).

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