



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Crown Premises Fire Safety Inspectorate

Annual Report

2024/25



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Introduction by the Chief Inspector, Peter Holland CBE QFSM FIFireE (Life)

I am pleased to present my Annual Report, which provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Crown Premises Fire Safety Inspectorate, (CPFSI) during April 2024 to March 2025.

On behalf of the government, the Inspectorate's statutory role is to ensure safety from fire in Crown Premises in England. Crown Premises are government buildings: Parliament, Crown Estates, Royal Palaces and all premises which are either owned or contracted directly by the Crown. CPFSI undertakes this important public safety role under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, (FSO). Safety from fire is achieved by inspecting levels of compliance and adopting appropriate measures to combat non-compliance promptly, effectively and efficiently. Employees and members of the public who utilise buildings under our regulatory responsibility, have the right to expect to be safe from fire. The FSO defines clearly, the Responsible Person as bearing the statutory responsibility to protect their buildings' occupants from fire. A competent person must undertake a Fire Risk Assessment, which is both suitable and sufficient for the premises and enables the occupants to escape safely from a fire.

Custodial premises continue to be the highest risk buildings from fire. Consequently, CPFSI have continued to work closely with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, (HMPPS), the Ministry of Justice, (MoJ) and private providers of prisons, in striving to reduce the risk of fire as is reasonably practicable. Although steps have been taken to improve fire safety in prisons, fires and subsequent injuries remain of serious concern.

In 2022/23 there were 269 fire-related injuries in prisons, increasing in 2023/24 to 594 and decreasing slightly in 2024/25 to 534.¹ Despite a slight reduction in fire-related injuries in prisons in 2024/25, this number has increased significantly over the last five years from 135 injuries in 2020/21.²

Over the last five years the number of prison fires has risen significantly from 1308 to 2932. This is mainly due to the misuse of vapes and electrical equipment by prisoners. In 2024/25, vapes were responsible for causing 1,972 fires, 67% of all prison fires.³ The high number of fire-related injuries in prisons clearly demonstrates the need for improved compliance with the FSO and further concerted action to reduce the frequency and impact of fires. HMPPS received additional funding in 2021/22 to improve general fire safety in prisons, however 44% of cells still do not have suitable in cell fire detection.⁴ However, HMPPS have recently trialled *The Safer Vape Pen Project*, aiming to reduce the risk of fire. Following the prison smoking

¹ HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting System data – unpublished

² HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting System data – unpublished

³ HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting System data – unpublished

⁴ HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting System data – unpublished

ban, vapes have been used by prisoners to heat illicit substances and as an ignition source for most prison fires. Consequently, this project oversaw the introduction of a new vape pen with integrated safety features, preventing tampering and re-purposing for drug use and fire-setting. Early deployment of this new vape pen in eight prisons has revealed promising results – this device has not been linked to any fires and the number of incidents whereupon prisoners were found under the influence of drugs have reduced significantly. The new vape pen is scheduled to roll out across the entire prison estate later this year, marking a significant advancement in prison safety.

Introduced in 2019, our Management Information System, (THEMIS) dynamically provides up-to-date information of the key indicators of fire risk across all Crown Premises. THEMIS has improved our ability to produce accurate fire safety management information, which has led to a more effective and efficient deployment of Inspectors. It generates a risk score, based on both the frequency of fires, the fire safety issues reported and outcomes from CPFSI inspections. Consequently, by monitoring and utilising the generated increase of a risk score, Inspectors can target promptly, those premises which are at the greatest risk of fire.

I wish to express my gratitude to the team of Inspectors for their continued perseverance, dedication and professionalism in undertaking their statutory responsibilities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Holland". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

1. Context and role of the Crown Premises Fire Safety Inspectorate

- 1.1 The CPFSI is a regulatory body, providing fire safety standards and ensuring compliance with the FSO to over 10,000 Crown Premises, (which are comprised of multiple buildings). Local Fire and Rescue Authorities, (FRAs) are the enforcing authorities for most non-crown premises to which the FSO applies, whilst the Office for Nuclear Regulation, (ONR) regulates nuclear sites in England. The Ministry of Defence, (MoD) have their own body of Fire Safety Inspectors – the Defence Fire Safety Regulator, which falls under the umbrella of the Defence Safety Authority.
- 1.2 In 2024/25, the annual budget for CPFSI was £1,127,500.00. The team was comprised of 7 Inspectors, 3 Team Leaders and the Deputy, who were supported by two administrative staff. Inspectors and Team Leaders have always and continue to be classified as home workers, as their roles entail regular travel to inspection sites across England. The Inspectorate operates under a signed protocol, providing professional independence within government whilst undertaking regulatory activities.
- 1.3 Fire safety is devolved in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These countries have their own arrangements to meet their statutory obligations for Crown Premises. CPFSI liaise with both the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Crown Premises Fire Safety Inspector in Wales, to share best practice and professional learning and development. Under the Fire Safety Order 2005, regular meetings are organised with enforcing authorities, i.e. Fire and Rescue Services, (FRSs), the Defence Fire Safety Regulator and National Fire Chiefs Council, to highlight evolving risks and foster a culture of continuous improvement, enhanced efficiency and consistent enforcement.
- 1.4 The inspection regime is designed to reduce the risk of fire and fire-related injuries by highlighting non-compliance. Most inspections of other Crown Premises are undertaken by one Inspector; however, the inspection process of prisons is complex, typically requiring four Inspectors on-site for up to three days. CPFSI work within detailed custodial protocols, which ensure both the Inspectors' personal safety and the prison's effective operation during the inspection. As prisoners and staff cannot escape from fire as easily in custodial premises, the inspection process is far more complex than in other types of premises.
- 1.5 Following inspections, CPFSI monitor whether initial advice is followed, and action plans are implemented. When this is not found to be the case, appropriate and urgent enforcement action is taken, adhering to the [Enforcement Policy](#) and following the principles of good enforcement, detailed in the [Regulators' Code](#). Under Section 49 of the FSO, immunity from prosecution exists for Crown bodies, however CPFSI can exercise the full range of statutory enforcement powers to non-Crown bodies working in or on Crown Premises.

2. The scale of the risk: The number of fires and injuries in Crown Premises

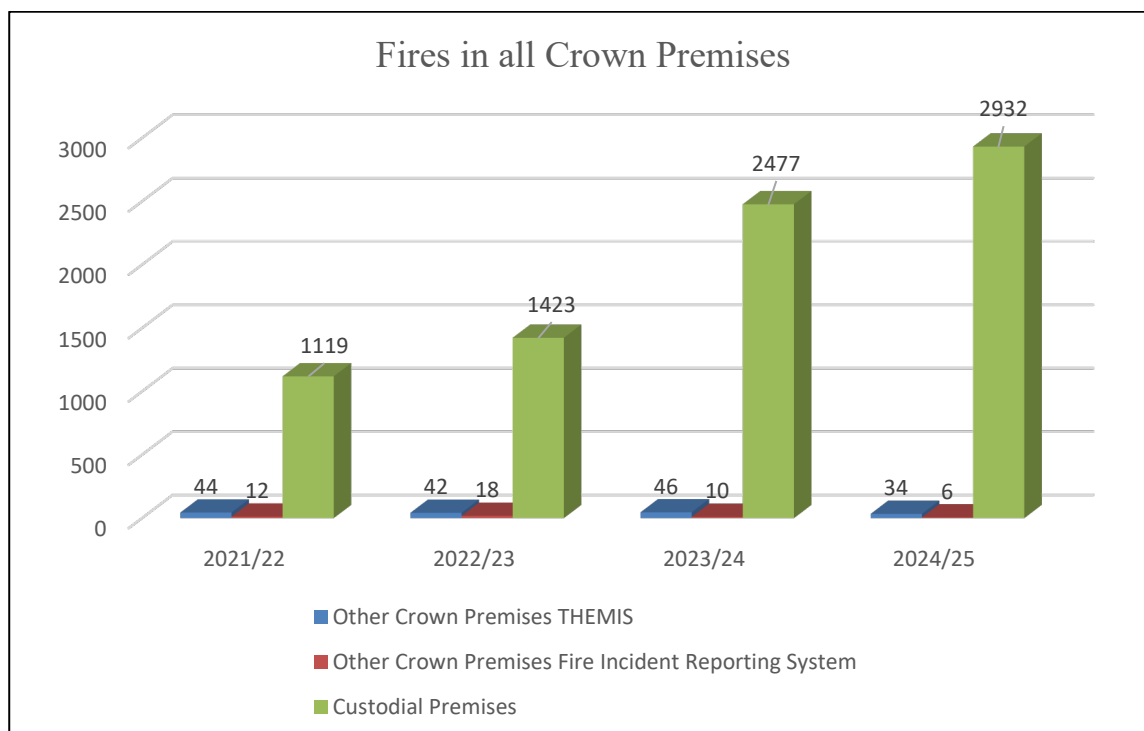
2.1 The Home Office’s Incident Recording System, (IRS) is used by the Fire and Rescue Services, (FRS) to record every fire-related incident for which they receive a call, including false alarms.⁵

2.2 HMPPS’ Fire Incident Reporting System records *all* fires in prisons, even those deemed to be so small that FRS attendance is not required, whilst the Home Office’s IRS system only records the more serious fires which require further assistance. Consequently, IRS statistics and HMPPS statistics are not directly compatible. HMPPS fire statistics are more accurate in measuring the risk of fires in prisons, as even small fires are an important indicator of risk - they are indicative of more serious fire setting behaviour.

2.3 Several premises which have already sustained fires are not readily identifiable as Crown Premises by the FRS because ownership is unclear to the attending FRS personnel. Consequently, these fires are not recorded by the FRS as being fires within Crown Premises.

Figure 1: Fires in all Crown Premises

SOURCE: THEMIS – Management Information System for prison fire injuries and fatalities, HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting (FIR) System data for prison fires, and the Home Office IRS data for other Crown Premises fires



⁵ Fires in Crown Premises attended by fire and rescue services and non-fatal casualties and fire-related fatalities in those fires, England - GOV.UK

2.4 Prison Fires

HMPPS fire statistics gained from the 116 prisons in England, revealed that in 2024/25 there were 2,932 recorded fires. This has risen from 2023/24, by 18% in which 2,477 fires were recorded. In the last five years there has been a 124% increase in the number of prison fires.⁶ The frequency of prison fires continues to be very high compared to the frequency of fires in other Crown Premises.

2.5 There are 101 public prisons in England managed by HMPPS. In 2024/25, HMPPS recorded 2,263 fires, of which 2,221 were started deliberately. The misuse of vapes by prisoners caused 1,548 fires.⁷

2.6 Private organisations manage the remaining 15 prisons. In 2024/25, HMPPS recorded 669 fires in private prisons. 640 of these fires were started deliberately, with the misuse of vapes being the ignition source for 424 fires.⁸

2.7 In 2024/25, the number of fires started in private prisons comprised 23% of all prison fires, however the number of privately owned prisons comprised only 13% of all prisons in England. Thus, the number of fires started in private prisons is more per capita than publicly owned prisons. Nevertheless, three privately operated prisons were responsible for 305 fires, which is 46% of all fires in private prisons. Furthermore, of the 116 prisons in England, there are 11 category D prisons which are all managed by HMPPS. These are open, minimal security facilities which occupy low-risk prisoners. Private organisations do not manage any category D prisons.⁹

2.8 Youth Custody Service Prisons

2.9 HMPPS statistics have revealed an increase in the frequency of fire incidents at Young Offender Institutions, (YOI). 37 fires were reported in 2022/23, rising to 61 fires in 2023/24 and 70 fires in 2024/25. In 2024/25, all 70 fires were started deliberately.¹⁰ Over the last three years, YOI fires have increased by 89% whereas prison fires have increased by 106% in the same period.

2.10 In 2024/25 HM Prison Werrington and HM Prison Wetherby were the only prisons dedicated entirely to Youth Custody Service, (YCS). HM Prison Feltham A is a Young Offender Institution for prisoners under the age of 18 and HM Prison Feltham B is a Category C prison and YOI for young adults aged 18-21. In

⁶ HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting System data – unpublished

⁷ HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting System data – unpublished

⁸ HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting System data – unpublished

⁹ HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting System data – unpublished

¹⁰ HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting System data – unpublished

2024/25, HM Prison Werrington recorded 13 fires, HM Prison Wetherby recorded 24 fires and HM Prison Feltham recorded 33 fires.¹¹

2.11 HM Prison Werrington and HM Prison Wetherby only hold prisoners who are under the age of 18. It is illegal to possess tobacco, e-cigarettes or vaping devices under the age of 18. Consequently, despite the misuse of vapes being the most common ignition source of all prison fires in England, they were not used to start any fires in either Werrington or Wetherby. In contrast, the misuse of electrical wiring was responsible for causing 97% of fires in both institutions.¹²

2.12 Courts and Custody Suites

2.13 Custodial suites are operated by the Prisoner Escort and Custody Service, (PECS) providers. This organisation is responsible for the secure escort, transfer and supervision of prisoners and detainees across courts in England and Wales. PECS monitor the welfare and ensure the safety of detainees. Consequently, PECS fall within the scope of the Fire Safety Order and are subject to regular inspection by CPFSI.

2.14 CPFSI inspections assess the level of fire risk across a range of premises. Custodial settings, including court holding cells are classified as high-risk due to the inability of occupants to self-evacuate in the event of fire. Inspection schedules are determined using fire incident data, compliance history and occupancy type. This information is used to develop a Risk-Based Inspection Programme, (RBIP) ensuring that high-risk premises are prioritised for regular inspection. In 2024/25, two fires were started in court custody suites.¹³

2.15 Other Crown Premises Fires

2.16 The CPFSI regulates 9,885 other Crown Premises sites. The Home Office's IRS statistics revealed that only a small number of fire incidents are attended by the FRS in other Crown Premises. The FRS attended 18 fires in 2022/23, decreasing to 10 in 2023/24 and to 6 in 2024/25.¹⁴ In contrast, THEMIS statistics revealed that there were 42 fires in 2022/23, rising to 46 fires in 2023/24 and decreasing to 34 fires in 2024/25.¹⁵ For further information, please refer to Paragraph 2.3

2.17 Deliberate and Accidental Fires

2.18 The number of deliberate fires increases significantly in custodial settings. In 2024/25, IRS statistics revealed that 95% of fires in custodial premises were started deliberately. In contrast, 33% of fires in other

¹¹ HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting System data – unpublished

¹² THEMIS – Management Information System – unpublished

¹³ HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting System data – unpublished

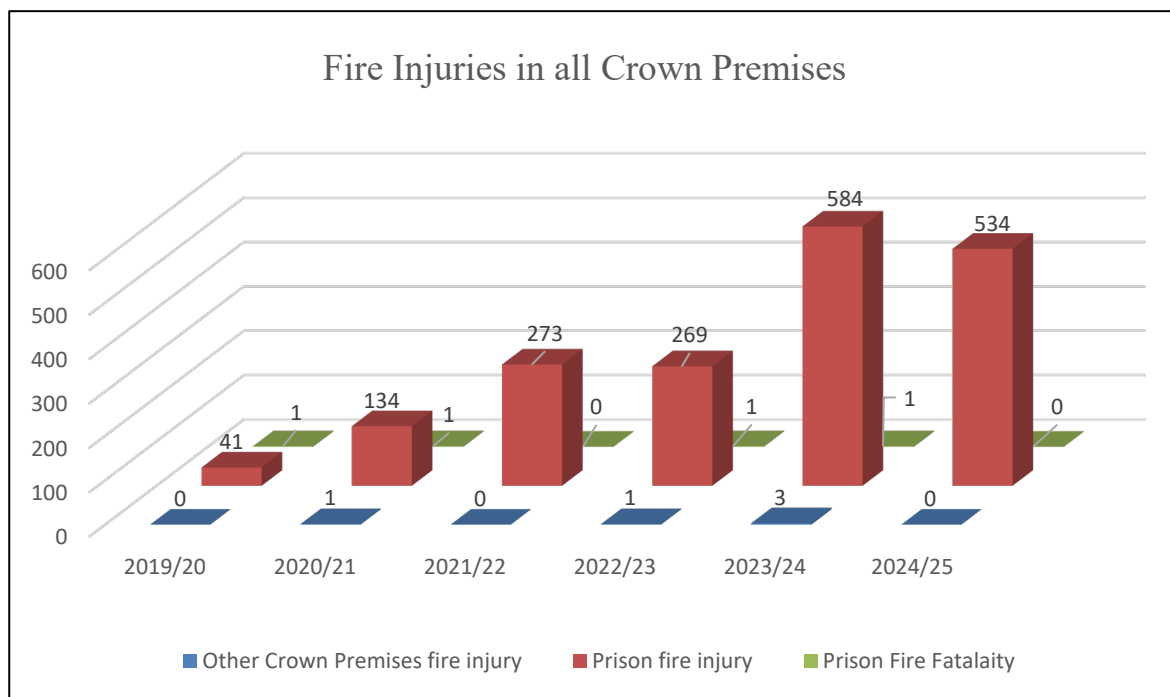
¹⁴ [Fires in Crown Premises attended by fire and rescue services and non-fatal casualties and fire-related fatalities in those fires, England - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁵ THEMIS – Management Information System – unpublished

Crown Premises were started deliberately.¹⁶ For further information on the distinction between deliberate and accidental fires, please read the **Fire Statistics Definitions Guidance**.

Figure 2: Fire injuries in all Crown Premises

SOURCE: THEMIS – Management Information System for prison fire injuries and fatalities, and the Home Office IRS data for other Crown Premises fire injuries



2.19 Statistics in Figure 2 reveal a significant increase in the number of fire-related injuries from 2019/20 to 2024/25. This increase is attributable in part, to the recording of Precautionary Assessments as injuries. These evaluations are undertaken by medical staff following an individual’s involvement with fire, even if no obvious injuries have occurred. Prior to 2019, Precautionary Assessments were not recorded as injuries.

2.20 The increase in fire-related injuries is also attributable to the increase of prison fires. In 2023/24, 584 fire-related injuries across prisons were reported, decreasing slightly in 2024/25, when 534 fire-related injuries were reported. The risk of injury dropped in 2024/25, when 18% of prison fires led to injuries, compared to 2023/24 in which 24% of prison fires led to injuries.

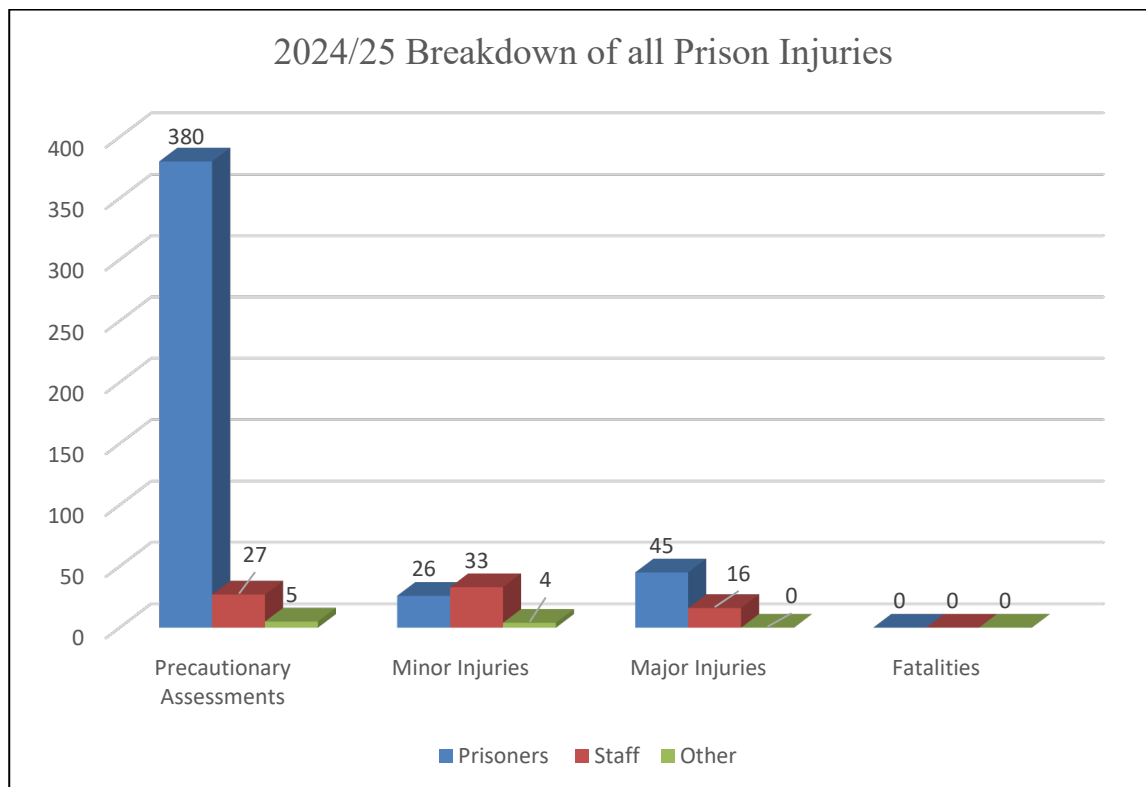
2.21 The risk of fire-related injuries increases in prisons, as the occupant cannot self-evacuate. Prison staff must take the extra time to open the secure cell door and tackle the fire. CPFSI investigate all injuries and

¹⁶ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64be67e8d4051a00145a91a2/other-building-fires-dataset-270723.ods>, based on the “ACCIDENTAL OR DELIBERATE” field

deaths, checking for statutory breaches of the FSO and ensuring measures are implemented to prevent similar occurrences.

Figure 3: 2024/25 Breakdown of injuries in prisons

SOURCE: HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting System data for prison fire injuries



2.21 Unpublished guidance from HMPPS Fire Incident Reporting System, categorises injuries into Precautionary Assessments and minor and major injuries:

- Precautionary Assessments; no injuries reported, but precautionary check to confirm.
- Minor injuries; minor first aid treatment administered, includes small cuts and abrasions, blisters, minor burns/ scalds, objects in ear or nose, strains and sprains, nose bleed.
- Major injuries; serious burns, smoke inhalation, unconscious and breathing, unconscious and not breathing.

2.22 2024/25 HMPPS fire statistics reveal that 77% of all injuries recorded are Precautionary Assessments.

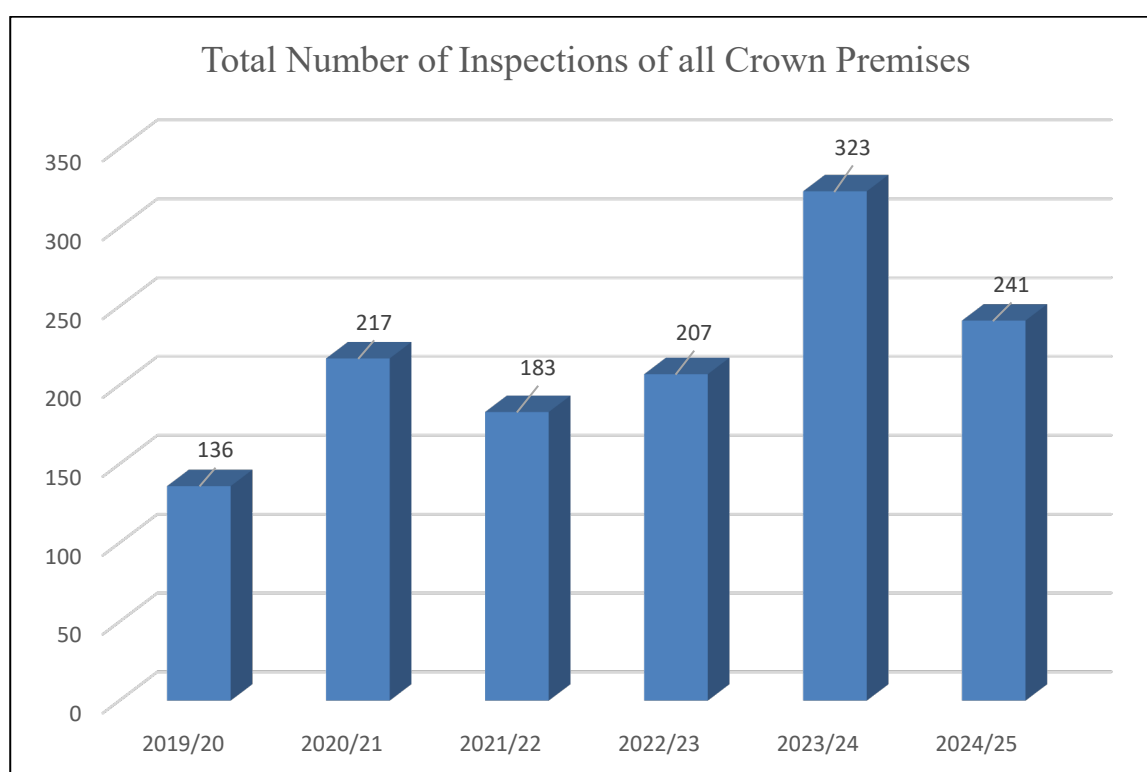
3. Report on inspection activity during the year

3.1 The 2024/25 breakdown of all Crown Premises inspections:

- 34 prison inspections, (14 full inspections, 19 follow-up inspections, and 1 post-fire on-site inspection).
- 207 inspections of other Crown Premises, (190 full inspections and 17 follow-up inspections).

Figure 4: Total number of inspections of all Crown Premises

SOURCE: *THEMIS – Management Information System*



3.2 Figure 4 reveals that overall inspection numbers dropped by 25% from 323 in 2023/24, to 241 in 2024/25. The number of inspections has decreased for several reasons: due to budget restrictions, CPFSI have been unable to fill a vacant post, several Inspectors have been undertaking important development training and education programmes, and the increasing number of prison fires requiring investigation, generates additional workloads.

3.3 In 2024/25, CPFSI inspected 29% of prisons in England. As prisons are at a higher risk to fire than other Crown Premises, they require a more frequent rate of inspection when compared to any other type of

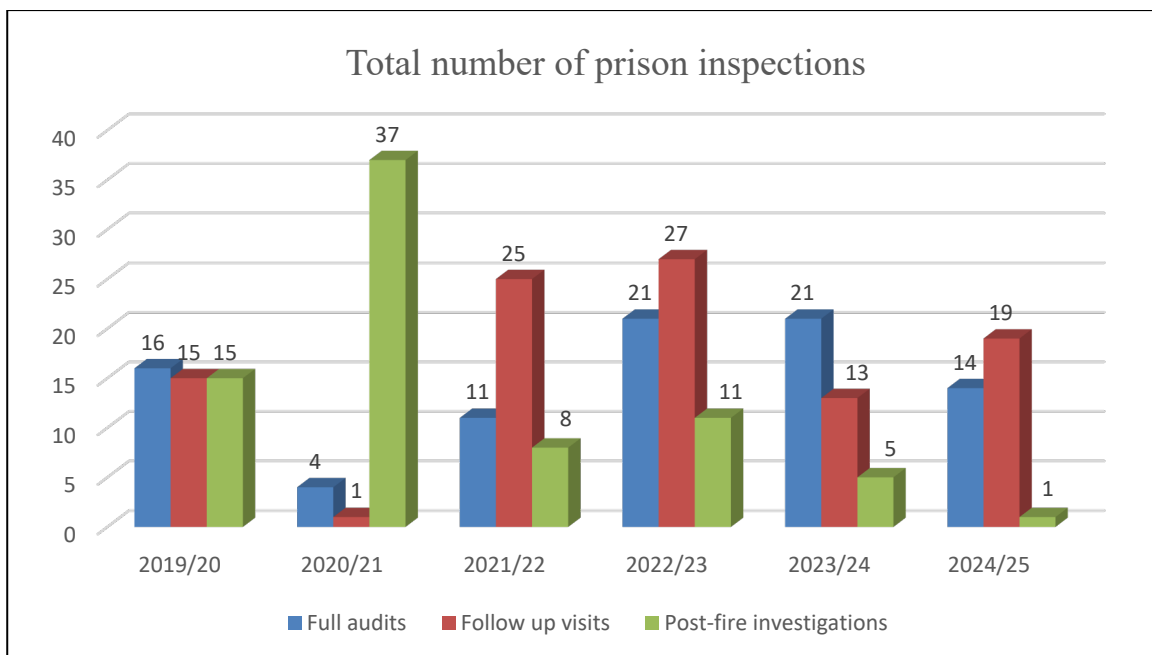
building. However, far more inspections are undertaken in the 9,885 Crown Premises, as there are far more buildings than the 116 prisons.

3.4 The Inspectorate must commit to an inspection programme of all sectors of the Crown portfolio, as increasing the inspection window increases the likelihood of a fire. The purpose of inspections is to improve fire safety management and reduce the risk of fire across all Crown premises. Presently, due to the large number of premises belonging to the Crown portfolio and the need to utilise CPFSI resources effectively, only a relatively small number of premises within each sector are scheduled for an annual inspection.

3.5 Investigations consist of on-site inspections and either remote or on-site investigations are conducted following every fire.

Figure 5: Total number of prison inspections

SOURCE: THEMIS – Management Information System



3.6 CPFSI investigations of prison estates, revealed that 95% of fires were started deliberately.¹⁷ The main cause of fire-related injuries was due to delays in fire detection. Delays were caused by a continuing shortfall in the number of suitable in-cell automatic fire detection, (AFDs).

¹⁷ THEMIS – Management Information System – unpublished

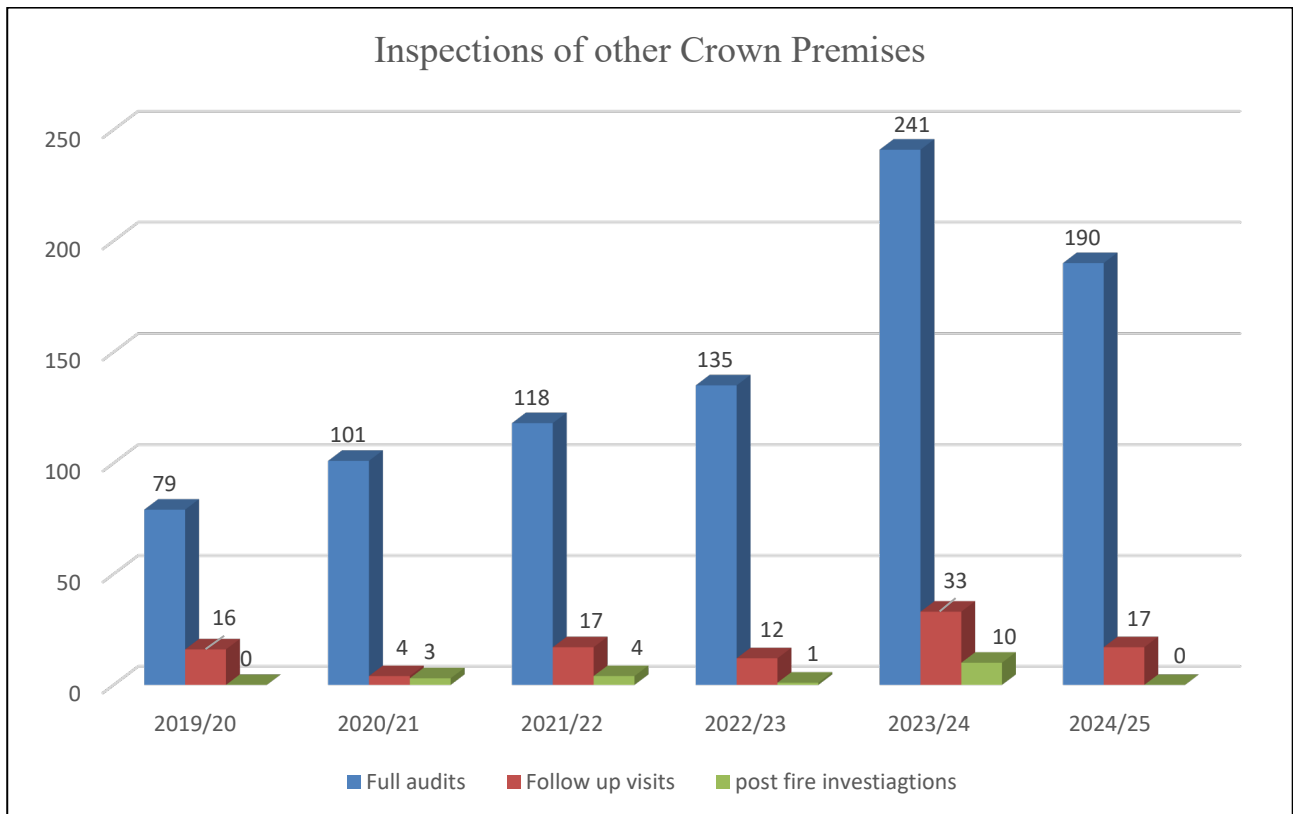
3.7 It is imperative that appropriate AFDs are installed in all prison cells, to ensure that staff are alerted immediately to fires. HMPPS have provided further funding to install suitable in-cell AFDs for prisons, however in 2024/25, 44% of prisons were awaiting installation of AFDs. Furthermore, there were instances in which prison wings were fitted with AFDs that were approaching end of life, whilst other wings were not in possession of AFDs or contained a very limited supply.

3.8 Effective early fire detection is critical in protecting inmates and staff from fires and preventing damage to the premises. Successful early detection is also supported through prompt fire suppression, protective respiratory equipment, clear instructions for staff in the event of a fire, effective fire drill training and smoke control. The second most serious risk of injury is from inadequate smoke control systems, which are required to protect both prisoners and staff from smoke inhalation.

3.9 Finally, the inspection programme identified concerns of inadequate fire-fighting equipment and poor emergency lighting. In all cases of non-compliance, either Action Plans or Enforcement Notices were served to the Responsible Persons.

Figure 6: Inspections of other Crown Premises, 2019/20 – 2024/25

SOURCE: THEMIS – Management Information System



3.10 A general lack of being prepared, was highlighted as the most serious risk across other types of Crown Premises. Such risks include inadequate staff training and a lack of effective fire drills to test emergency procedures. Effective preparation and required procedures would identify potential problems and help staff to address them.

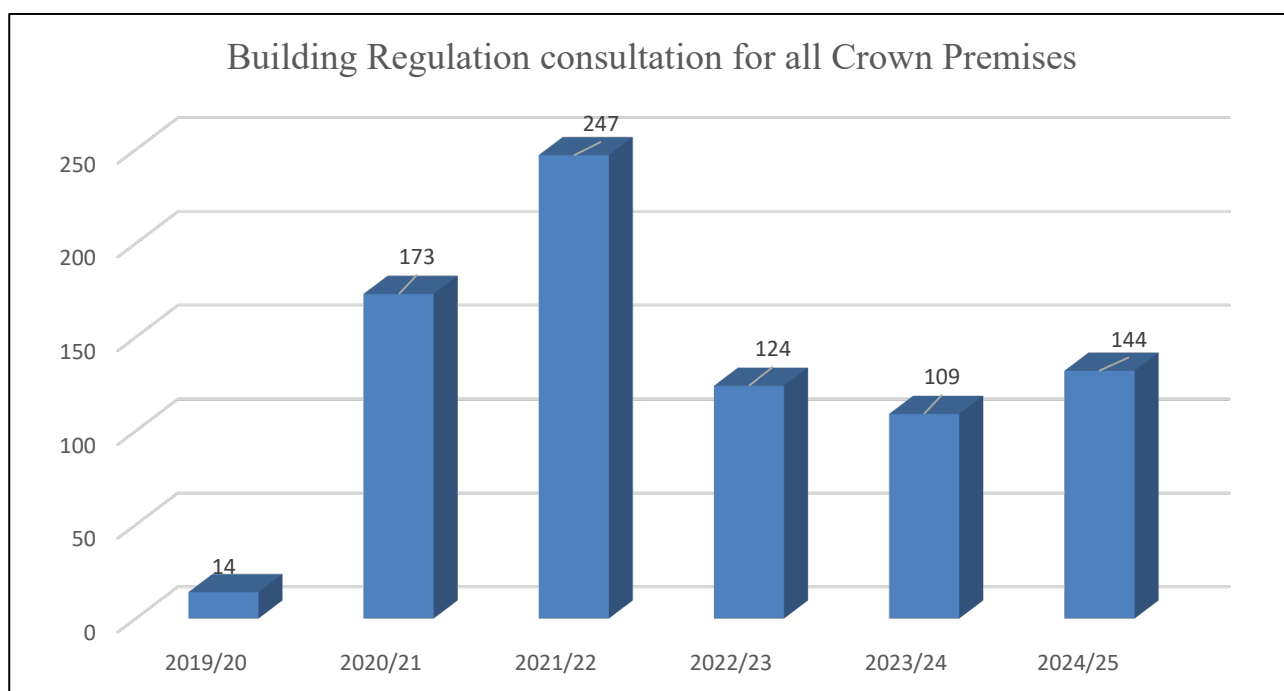
3.11 Furthermore, several inspections revealed that the poor state of fire-resisting doors hindered quick and safe escapes. In such cases of non-compliance, the Responsible Persons received formal notification via Enforcement Notices, advising of FSO measures with which they must comply.

3.12 There were recurring themes across the entire Crown portfolio, including inadequate fire safety management and risk assessments and inadequate Action Plans, that would not achieve compliance even if implemented.

3.13 Building Regulation Consultations

Figure 7: Building Regulations consultations for all Crown Premises, 2019/20 – 2024/25

SOURCE: THEMIS – Management Information System



3.14 The Inspectorate receives Building Regulation consultations from privately appointed Inspectors or Local Authority Building Control departments. These consultations are demand led and contain proposals for both existing and new buildings. At a minimum, the Inspectorate ensures that the proposals adhere to the requirements of the Building Regulation guidance, which has been used to modify or construct the premises.

3.15 The Inspectorate provides guidance on the fire safety elements of the building proposal, by reviewing the consultations, and if required liaises with the sender or visits the site. This ensures that the premises adhere to the requirements of the FSO.

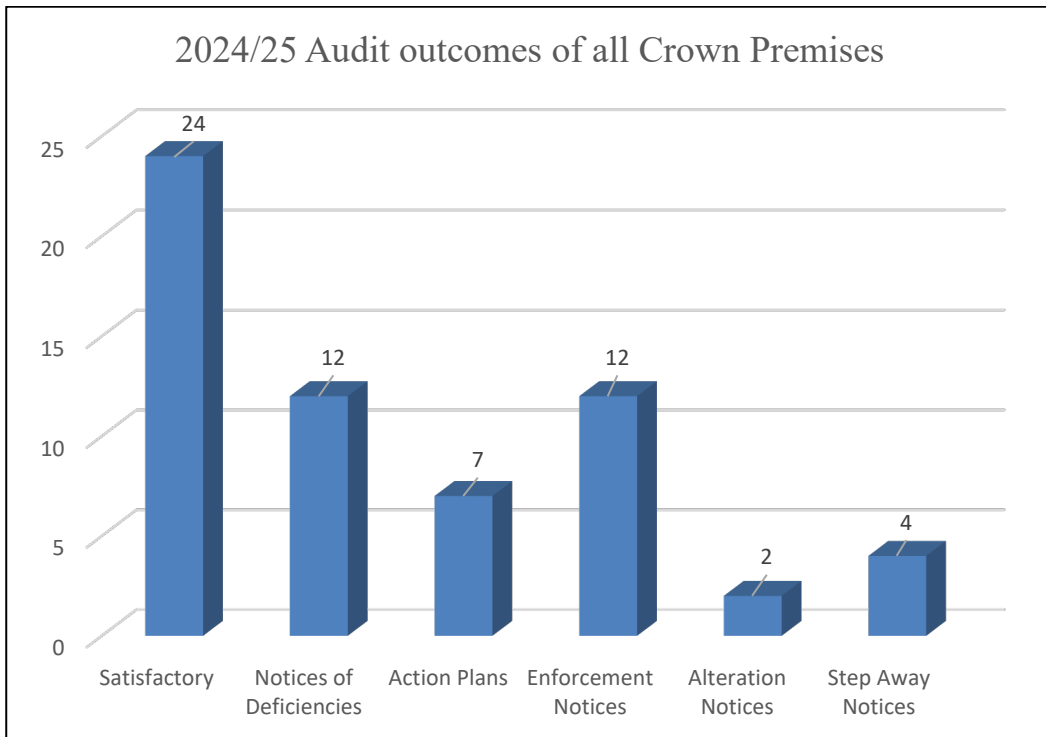
4. Compliance/ non-compliance

<u>Informal Notifications</u>	
Notice of Deficiencies	Issued when minor deficiencies are identified in the fire safety measures or management, which the Responsible Person can resolve without further oversight.
Action Plan	Issued when significant deficiencies are identified in the fire safety measures or management, which the Responsible Person can resolve readily. The Responsible Person is expected to compose a proposal, addressing the recommendations of the Action plan within 28 days of receipt.

<u>Formal Notifications</u>	
Enforcement Notices (Article 30 of FSO)	Served when significant risks require the direct intervention of CPFSI.
Alteration Notices (Article 29 of FSO)	Served when serious or potentially serious fire safety risks are identified and must be managed by the Responsible Person under the supervision of CPFSI.
Prohibition Notices (Article 31 of FSO)	Served to the Responsible Person, when a foreseeable or immediate risk is so serious, that the use of the premises must be restricted or prohibited.

Figure 8: 2024/ 25 Audit outcomes of all Crown Premises

SOURCE: THEMIS – Management Information System



4.1 Outcomes of 2024/25 audits of prisons:

- 15 Satisfactory
- 4 Notices of Deficiency
- 5 Action Plans
- 12 Enforcement Notices
- 2 Alteration Notices
- 4 Step Away Notices

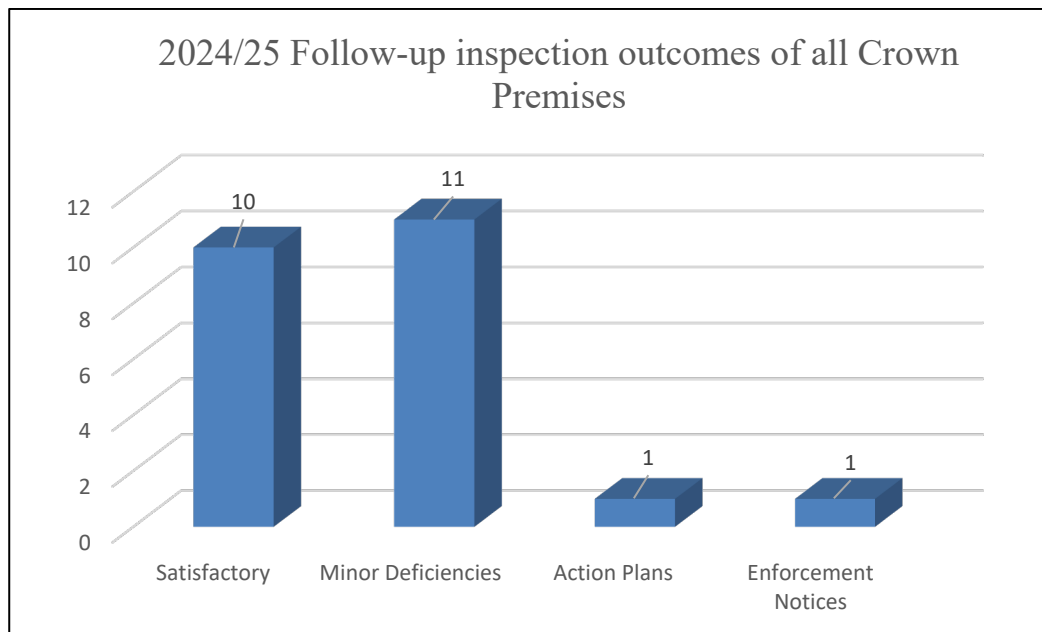
4.2 Outcomes of 2024/25 audits of other Crown Premises:

- 9 Satisfactory
- 8 Notices of Deficiency
- 2 Action Plans

4.3 Follow-up inspections

Figure 9: 2024/ 25 Follow-up inspection outcomes of all Crown Premises

SOURCE: THEMIS – Management Information System



4.4 Follow-up inspections are undertaken several weeks, (and occasionally months) after the premises have been served with either an Enforcement Notice or an Action Plan. Follow-up inspections entail a thorough analysis, whereupon CPFSA monitor progress against actions and ensure that the premises is complying with the FSO.

4.5 Outcomes of prisons that were subject to follow-up inspections:

- 8 were deemed satisfactory
- 7 minor non-compliance issues were addressed
- 1 Action Plan was required
- 1 further Enforcement Notice was issued

4.6 Outcomes of other Crown Premises that were subject to follow up inspections:

- 2 were deemed satisfactory
- 4 minor non-compliance issues were addressed
- 0 Action Plans were required
- 0 Enforcement Notices were issued

4.7 HMPPS must ensure that all officers comprising the collective Responsible Person, are aware of and are appropriately accountable for meeting their statutory responsibilities. CPFSI are aware that prison governors do not always exercise the full control, which a Responsible Person needs under the FSO. Furthermore, governors may not have the financial authority to take all necessary steps to ensure compliance, particularly where major expenditure is required.

5. Summary of overall picture

5.1 The frequency and risk to life from fire remains low in most Crown Premises, (even government buildings which are occupied by large numbers of people). In contrast, the frequency of custodial fires has risen significantly over the last five years.

5.2 In 2024/25, the number of prison fires reached its apex 2,932. However, the number of fire-related injuries decreased slightly from the previous year at 534. The Inspectorate continues to work closely with HMPPS to reduce the numbers of prison fires.

5.3 The significant increase in the rate of prison fires is largely caused by the misuse of both vapes and electrical equipment by inmates. In 2024/25, HMPPS recorded that 95% of prison fires were started deliberately. Inmates start fires for numerous reasons: challenging prison regimes, conflicts with other prisoners and staff and to inflict harm. Despite this, the rate of fire fatalities has remained stable since 2019.

5.4 Delays in the detection of fires in prison, increase the risk of both prisoners and staff sustaining a fire-related injury. Delays are largely caused by a shortfall of suitable in-cell AFD – this is a persistent problem in many parts of the prison estate. To further reduce the risk from fire, improvements must be made to smoke control systems to protect prison occupants from the effects of smoke spread and inhalation.

5.5 There continues to be a small number of fires in the remainder of the Crown sector. Nevertheless, ineffective fire safety management is a common theme identified during on-site inspections.

6. Plans going forward: 2024/25 and beyond

6.1 Utilise Management Information System (THEMIS):

CPFSI analyses Themis data to provide accurate and current risk information. This enables the RBIP to target the highest risk premises. Thus, Inspectors will be effectively deployed to those premises where people are the most vulnerable to fire, ensuring their safety.

6.2 Increasing inspections in high-risk premises:

Themis' identification of non-compliance does not translate to large scale non-compliance by all Crown Premises. On the contrary, CPFSI are effectively locating non-compliance and targeting those premises. Nevertheless, CPFSI continues to sample lower-risk premises to ensure the maintenance of consistent standards.

6.3 Deeper dive into fires and identifying how they could be prevented.

CPFSI liaises with the FRS specifically their Fire Investigation teams, who establish the cause and spread of the fire. CPFSI utilises this information during post-fire inspections to identify particular failings under the FSO. By understanding the context and circumstances in which fires occur, the Responsible Person can compose fire-based risk assessments, confirming their knowledge of how the fires have started and implement specific measures to prevent similar future fires.

6.4 Ensuring compliance

CPFSI has been increasingly focussed on ensuring Crown Premises' compliance with the FSO, through analysing inspection and enforcement history to generate RBIPs, examining fire incident data and risk intelligence, responding to safety concerns, investigating the management and maintenance of fire safety precautions and taking appropriate enforcement action against premises, whereupon there are significant risks to life from fire.