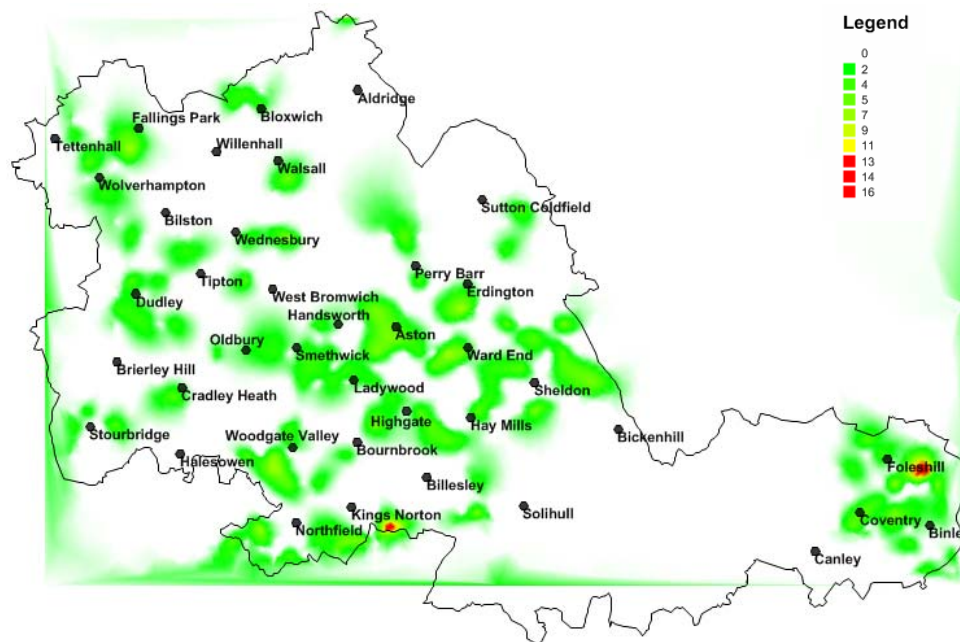


Trends in Arson Dwelling Fires 2007/2008 and 2008/ 2009

Each time a fire engine is called out to an emergency they collect valuable information about the nature of the incident. This allows us to monitor patterns and trends that emerge from the data. Patterns and trends help us to form a picture to how we can best use our time to train for the most frequent type of emergencies and more importantly reduce the numbers of incidents (in the case of arson fires, we work closely with the Police and other agencies).

One way of examining data is to map the information so we can see any geographical trends. For example are arson dwelling fires occurring in the same areas year on year or do they move around the area?



(Map 1)

Arson dwelling fires accounted for 1.21% (487) of all incidents in 2008/9 (40,088). The number of arson dwelling fires WMFS attended in 2008/9 had reduced by 12.72% compared to 2007/8 where we responded to approximately 558 fires of this type.

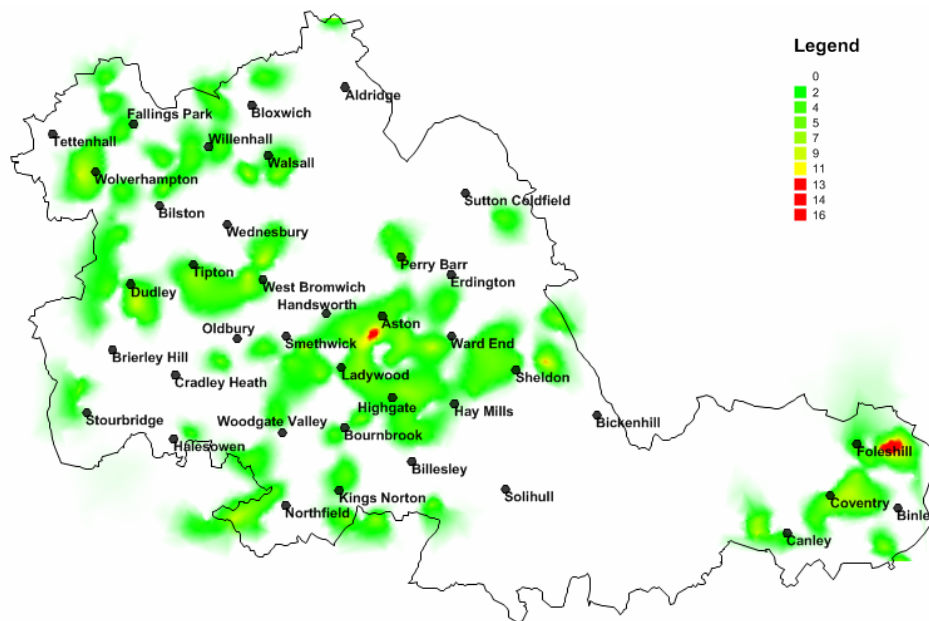
Dwelling fires pose significant life risk to the population as they can occur when people are at home. West Midlands Fire Service spends a considerable amount of time trying to reduce risk in dwelling fires through enforcement and increasing smoke alarm ownership.

Map 1 is a map of the West Midlands metropolitan area. This is the area covered by West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS). The coloured areas on the map depict concentrations of arson dwelling fires responded to by WMFS during 1st April 2007 - 31st March 2008; the white areas show where there was no concentration of fires and the red areas are where the highest concentrations of arson dwelling fires have occurred.

Map 1 shows us that the highest concentrations of arson dwelling fires during 2007/2008 occurred in the Kings Norton area of Birmingham and the Foleshill area of Coventry.

Due to the high life risk in the areas mentioned above Foleshill has 2 wholetime fire engines (24 hours a day) and Kings Norton has 1 wholetime fire engine and 1 fire engine staffed on the 12 hour late shift (10am - 10pm).

We can then compare this to the most recent financial year's data to identify any similarities or differences to the geographical location of arson dwelling fires (Map 2).



(Map 2)

Map 2 is a replica of map 1 but illustrates the latest financial year's worth of incident data 2008/2009. Again the red areas depict where the highest concentrations of incidents occur.

Both map 1 and 2 reveal similar patterns. The red areas on map 2 have altered slightly from map 1, in 2008/9 the highest concentrations of arson dwelling fires were in the areas of Aston and Foleshill.

Both Aston and Foleshill Fire Stations have 2 wholetime fire engines.

Because these fires are started deliberately, we need to adopt different tactics to those which were accidental.

Where fires are started accidentally, we can work with householders and others people, to educate them about the causes of fire and to help improve understanding and behaviour, to drive down the number of fires occurring, thus preventing risk to life and property.

In the case of arson, it is more difficult for individuals to prevent this form happening to them and their property, but we can target the offenders through a campaign of detection and enforcement, as well as providing intervention for young people who are starting to get drawn into anti-social behaviour.

We do much of this work through the West Midlands Arson Task Force, which has been in operation for a number of years and has helped to achieve a high level of success in reducing the cases of arson and its effects on the community.

The team comprises officers from both West Midlands Fire Service and West Midlands Police.